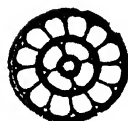


SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE

FIRST NUMBER



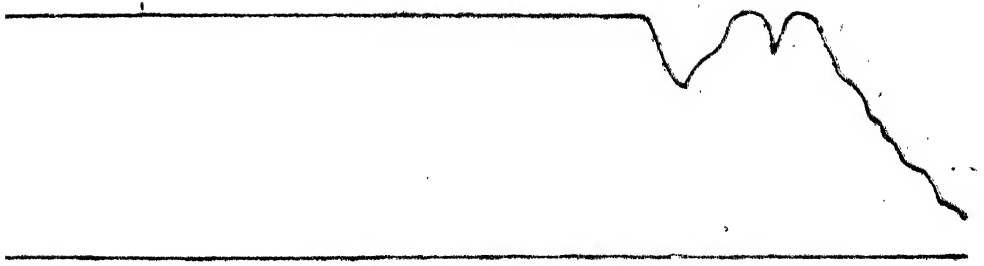
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From the stunned rapture of a single rock
Thrust forward by a cleft in the mountain mood
Two purple peaks wake into our night and day,
One mastering the blind hours, one mothering
The moments that uplift their cry to the Vast.

Behind them stretches breakless and aloof—
Mile on straight mile—the unseizable sovereignty
Of force that sheds all feature, love that wears,
No face for the deep prayer of the valley's heart—
Sheer walls upon whose granite godhead crumble
The ages of mankind—a trackless quiet
Where light looks inward and the world is lost !

Out of that mystery sprang your passionate Word,
O sweet companion-crests—two syllables
Of beauty softening down to our myriad dream
The timeless steep and silence of the One.

K. D. SETHNA

THE MASTER

He brought the calm of a gigantic sleep :
Earth's mind—a flicker gathering sudden gold
Merged with unknowable vistas to come back
A fire whose tongue had tasted paradise....

A plumbless music rolled from his far mouth :
Waves of primeval secrecy broke white
Along the heart's shores, a rumour of deathless love
Afloat like a vast moon upon the deep.

K. D. SETHNA



Sri Aurobindo

THE FEET OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

O to besom a path for the Mother,
To a welcoming-place apart, —
Road running, meant for no other,
Straight to the heart.

Be Her light footfall a token
Of a Stillness fraught with Grace;
Keep the truthward prayer unspoken
Her sandals trace.

Not solely Heaven descended
But earth upflowers to God
Eachwhere Her heaven-attended
Silence trod.

ARJAVA

INVOCATION OF THE DIVINE MOTHER

FOR HER EMERALD OF LIFE

Shakti of God that moves upon the waters,
Greatness and wideness of Spirit everlasting,
From senses, mind and heart, from a myriad moods and quarters
Enter with Thy puissances, transmuting and recasting.

FOR HER TOPAZ OF TRUTH-EXISTENCE

Wisdom of God, silent above Time-sources,
Transcendent peak all creature-ken outvasting,
Bring to heaven's roadsteads earth by devious courses,
Calm, ordinant as lodestone though all ways are overcasting.

FOR HER AMETHYST OF THE POWER OF BEAUTY

Beauty, star-enroling, a strangeling here
From eldest aeons fraught with overthrow
Of shadowhood, because Thy worshippers draw near,
Once gaze—and then forswear all ease until they know.

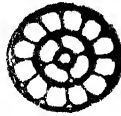
FOR HER RUBY OF REALISATION

Joyhood, earth-englobing, God-victory,
In the east Thy dawn-rose banners faintly show ;
Aidant to Love, the spear-hosts sweep from Eternity,
Till Time is heaven-conquered and the dateless bugles blow.

ARJAVA



The Mother



The Mother's Message

The earth will enjoy a lasting and living peace only when men understand that they must be truthful and sincere even in their international dealings.

For the Governments honesty lies not only in saying what they are doing but also in doing what they say.

CONTENTS

POEMS

	Page
NOTE by K. D. Sethna	1
ARJAVA (J. C. Chadwick)	
Prelude	3
Moksha	3
The Divine Shakti	4
The Divine Love	5
The Flower of Light	5
Star-Purified	6
New Country	6
DILIP KUMAR ROY	
Art Aspiring	7
Hymn to Grace	8
The Devotee	9
The Dancer's Rhythm	10
NIRODBARAN	
Travail	11
A Throb of the Vast	12
NOLINI KANTA GUPTA	
A Mystic hymn	13
Silence	13
The March into the Night	14
NISHIKANTO	
The Sleeping Lion	15
Triple Tremolo	16
Descent	16
PUNJALAL	
The Baby-Bard.	17
Quatrains	17
GIRDHIRLAL	
In the Deep	19
The Face of My Master	19
Look !	20
ANILBARAN ROY	
The Morning Star	21
An Echo	21-
The Guide	22

	Page
JAYANTILAL	
Sri Aurōbindo	23
You Have Built a New Mansion of Love	25
RANI MAITRA	
Pearl-Moon	26
Expectant	26
MINNIE D. SETHNA	
Sanctuary	27
Remembrance	27
K. D. SETHNA	
Silver Grace	28
“Savitri”	28
Prayer	29
Agni	29
Disloyalty	30
Mukti	30
TWO LETTERS FROM SRI AUROBINDO	
Spiritual Evolution	31
The Central Process of the Integral Yoga	34
WHAT IS SRI AUROBINDO DOING ? —K. H. Gandhi	37
SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF SUPER MANHOOD	
—Haridas Chaudhury	57
SRI AUROBINDO AND THE HEXAMETER —K. D. Sethna	79
THE PHILOSOPHER AS AN ARTIST —Nolini Kanta Gupta	113
DISTICHS —Nolini Kanta Gupta	117
SRI AUROBINDO'S LIFE AND THOUGHT	
—K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar	120
THE ETERNAL DETRACTORS —Dilip Kumar Roy	113
THE REVOLUTION IN SCIENCE (A Letter) —Sri Aurobindo	137
THE NEW WORLD OF SCIENCE —Jatindra Ball	138
THE CHANGED SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK (A Letter)	
—Nolini Kanta Gupta	157
WAR AND AFTER-WAR —Vasanta K. Donde	159

POEMS

Taking the whole of man's nature as his province and working not merely to destroy the forms of ignorance that hold man's soul a prisoner but also to create new forms of light for the soul's self-expression, Sri Aurobindo stands at the same time as a Master of Yoga and as the centre of a cultural renaissance. Of this renaissance, poetry is one of the chief activities. To the intense sight, intense word and intense rhythm that constitute the poetic phenomenon Sri Aurobindo and his followers bring a consciousness in living touch with realms beyond those that usually yield their riches in verse. Here is not only the imagination drawing upon secret subtle senses for revealing beauty and through beauty the power of a life greater than the external we know from day to day: here is a breaking out of symbolic figures from still more concealed regions — the Occult comes forth with a direct presence of the baffling supernatural, the Psychic with a piercing concrete innermost sweetness flowing from the Divine, the Spiritual with a large yet intimate luminosity from either "deep within" or "high above". All these planes have different casts of speech and sound embodying the vision proper to each, and all can attain equal poetic perfection. But the poetry that is derived from "high above", from an ether of consciousness felt to be overarching the mind, an immense space of undiscovered deific being which to the Yogic sight is situated "overhead", makes the rarest type of utterance in that it has been caught most scantily by the world's poets. As a rule, the "overhead" splendour gets translated to a mental atmosphere, an atmosphere of spiritualised ideas and emotions and imaginative emblems rather than the sheer Spirit's thrilled vastitudes without the mind stepping in as interpreter of their figures and significances. Among the poets represented in these pages, there is on a few occasions a remarkable reaching up to the top-most ranges of the sheer Spirit, the Vedic and Upanishadic inspiration, while of the lower ranges there is now and again an admirably full outburst. However, whether tapping the "overhead" or the other mystical planes, the majority of the poems mould the English language into a style which with words shining or subdued gives us not only a many-sided mystical meaning but a vivid vision and impact of mystical reality, a revelatory rhythm carrying unfathomable tones of mystical experience. These things are new inasmuch

THE DIVINE SHAKTI

COSMIC, TRANSCENDENT, INDIVIDUAL

Send Thy pure cadences, O Mother Divine,
To echo inly through the caves
Of a deepening heart which knows itself for Thine.
Play Thy moon-music on the quiet waves
Of an ocean's wideness in the still soul,
Where tidal waters wait Thy hushed control.

Unsullied wisdom of gold which was thrice refined,
Shine in the clear space of holy noon
On all the upland hollows of the mind :
May every shadow-harboured thought be strewn
With solar vastness and compelled
To feel all fear and all self-limits quelled.

Men have found Thee in wildness and the sharp-tanged air,
Breathed of green multitudes of earth,
Far from hate's city, orbits of despair,
Alleys of desire or sultry streets of dearth.
Take my offered will and let it be
Fragrant as Thine own, tameless, pure and free.

THE DIVINE LOVE

Surging softly on the pebbles of the brim
To that ocean-swaying under the quiet moon,
Wave-syllables quicken enchantments dim
Through this long hour of midnight's nether noon.

Far forgotten now the heaviness of day,
The unreal shadows and all things that die ;
Immortal prescience on the pearl-white way
Where the moon's magic drips down from the sky.

Vision fails and hearing gropes to seize no more
Foam silver-shining, dream-notes of the wave :
The hushed soul mirrored, echoed, gained the shore
Of light self-offered, of taintless love that gave.

THE FLOWER OF LIGHT

This whiteness has no withering :
 When petals fall,
 Miraculous swan's-down through the air,
 A hundred petals build the crowning flower
 Still, nor all
Dissevering gusts can make that stateliness less fair.

The bee can settle in its heart of light —
 O wingèd soul ;
But we with fettered feet and soiled with clay
 Gaze with bewildered tears
 At that quintessenced goal,
Craving one prized petal-touch may light on our dismay.

STAR-PURIFIED

O draw some divination from the stars
To shape anew the wryness and misgrowth
Of worlds where light is scathed or ill-fare mars
The heart by dimness and the deed by sloth.
To gaze and gaze upon the fire-strewn sky
Until the hush of heaven loom within,
Where the unshadowed splendours fill the eye
And world-renewing harmonies begin.

You stars who span with strength long leagues of space,
Blessed beyond the confines of our thought,
Surely you guard the palace sages sought,
Gold-shining sentries of Truth's dwelling place.
Emptied of shadow, we would be as you, —
Gold untarnished, — girt vigil of the True.

NEW COUNTRY

Precarious boat that brought me to this strand
Shall feed flame-pinnacles from stem to stern,
Till not one rib my backward glance can find —
Down to the very keelson they shall burn.

Now to the unreal sea-line I would no more yearn;
Fain to touch with feet an unimaginable land....
The gates of false glamour have closed behind;
There is no return.

I will call Thee in my heart
With my acons' yearning cry
Touching through symbolic art
Thy Reality.

In rich unison with Thy
Pure compassion's fecund flame,
Weaving in soul's rosary
The spell of Thy name.

May I feel all sentient things'
Sentiments and prisoned dreams
Of high flight with outspread wings
To Thy zone of gleams,
Fain of simple sigh for bliss
Aching in shadow for Thy nest,
(Warm with welcome, soft with peace)
At the end of quest.

Not for fear I seek Thy nest —
What is sky for, if one furls
Wings when Thy sun's rise in east
Squanders mystic pearls
Of endeavour dizzy with speed,
Beauty's pageant, rapture's height,
Sowing in each soul the seed
Of Thy dangerous Light ! —

But to hail Thy love blue-born
Let my discipline of gloom
Hatch in blood Thy regal scorn
For the darkest doom.
In Thy ether I shall fly
Dower with wings my clay-born art,
O deep starry secrecy
Twinkling in my heart.

HYMN TO GRACE

Art thou, O Grace, an answer as of light
Unto questionings of shadow—a sure ring
Of juvenile laughter claiming its birth-right
Of new dawn when life's sun is westering ?

Or art thou, Grace a hymn that sleeps in the heart,
Unconscious of its cadence aureate,
Waking, athrill, when the dark shades depart
Like a rose of faith no doubt may violate?

Or maybe, Grace, thou art the lilt of green
Caressing winter's loneliness to hues,
Wresting from sapless twigs the assent of sheen
With lips of new leaves as thy spring-breeze woos ?

Or, when life's at the neap, O Grace, dost thou
Come like a Plenisher, a gurgling flood
Of flaming sky-love's passion to endow
Our old and outworn veins with thy fresh blood ?

I know not (there, who whispers still: "I know"?).
Thy name is legion, aspects ever new,
And yet thou art the one bloom that would blow
On stems of clay thy star-face to re-view !

O mirror of loveliness, subduing murk
With inconscience — yet using all that die
As foils for thy rich termless rapture's spark,
Frail yet invincible as Destiny !

THE DEVOTEE

[From the DEVOTEE AND THE DIVINE]

“ Not one leaf of the dwarfest tree may fall
Into the sere and off its parent twig
But that my Lord great Vishnu sanctions it :
For 'tis His will that overarches all,
His sentinel love broods o'er the universe
From galaxies to atoms, 'tis His blue
That blues our hueless hours and 'tis His green
That canopies our dream exposed to hail
Of Fate and scorch of cruel fires — His hope
Sustains the feeble, His strength makes the cripple
Scale mountains. He is omniprevalent,
Outgleams in springs He hatches in the rocks,
Transmuting sandy sepulchres to verdant
Valleys aflower with laughter and dance of life....

“ Beloved, was there on earth a worshipper
Of Thine who counted pain as penalty
When agony he bore for Thy love's sake ?
Storms burst to lash us, whipped by destiny ;
Dark visitations come to cow the timid
Who would play only for the smallest stakes,
Unmindful of Thy mystic haunting call,
But were there ever any among the crew
Who heard Thy dangerous flutelet's call and still
Eschewed Thy luminous Vast for shadowy gains
Of twinkling shore-lights ? Could one reck of risk
Or even regard a shipwreck as disaster
Once he has glimpsed Thy Main of magic moods ?
Thou knowest, Sire, 'tis no mere flimsy fancy's
Ephemeral effusions, nor a poet's
Romantic heave to pain for pain's own sake.
For pain is pain and suffering flails the flesh :

Only the pain is more than countervailed
By a subterranean bliss when it is borne
For the supreme Beloved : then one perceives
That all such pain is leavened by a strange
Rhythm of masked delight and then Thy love's
Own rise and fall one feels in dim heart-beats.
The more our anguish, deeper the delight.
When consciousness is tuned to this strange bliss
Lone-petalling in the soul, a mystic hush
Deepens within with the ever-deepening storm
Outside—an embryonic premonition
That Dark is the penultimate of Dawn
Stirs in the womb of pain hailed for Thy sake...."

THE DANCER'S RHYTHM

He misses not the count of a single hour,
Nor passes by one fleeting aspiration :
Each moment, lost in quenching flames of passion
He resurrects as Light's unfading Flower.

But why must our timepiece conceal His time ?
And tears of pain seep fruitless in life's sands ?
What heart invites the mind misunderstands !
Is Beauty a mere paradox and mime ?

The alien-intimate welkin rings with the answer
(Like stars self-luminous, like song's breast aheave
Were it less musical would we believe ?) :
" The onlooker's rhythm is not that of the Dancer."

Creation like a fair
Offers all things
From a child's toy to the sun's
Space-haunted wings.

To our bound mortality
Our dream of a life
Tasting the infinite bliss
Seems but a brief

Thought-mist dying away
Beyond day's edge :
For soon follows Night's
Dragon-image

That grips within its claws
The seed of light,
Till an omnipotence
Crowned with a white

Immortal memory
Comes to awake
From frozen somnolence
The germinal streak.

Then the coiled serpent-fire
Rises again
Into its rapturous heaven,
Without a strain

Of time's flame-wavering mood,
And a new birth
Begins from the travail
Of aspiring earth.

A THROB OF THE VAST

Thy rapturous Presence I adore
In my secluded heart,
It grows like a sun ever more
And makes my spirit a part

Of thy heaven-worshipped loneliness,
Where pale moth-crowds of thought
And flux of time in a fathomless
Rhythm of hush are wrought,

My days are changed into a gold
Unquenchable fire of soul
That climbs from the body's dragon-hold
Towards the timeless Whole.

The caverned distances of my mind
Are filled with an incense-breath
Of beauty blown by a crystal wind
From a land of aureoled Death.

And now I see around my deep
Reverie an endless flow
Of ecstasy from thy white sleep
Like a mirrored range of snow.

I am a throb of that Vast,
Beating each fragment-hour
In the unknown secrecy glassed
Of thy vision's eagle-power.

The first tremor of the light, lo the dream-journey !
 Night's desire is now appeased, she feels the Sun within her —
 The Mother of Infinity holds in her bosom her first Guest :
 The Call awakes in the lotus-scented senses !

On the far shore where moves the Fiery Wheel
 Rose, unheeded, the cry of the Spaces —
 It spread and enveloped even our shadowy horizons :
 A golden vision flutters on Earth's eye-lids,
 As the flaming Spider weaves his luminous web around himself !

The Bard wheels onward in his sweeping march :
 He gathers in perfect rhythm the soul's obeisances,
 Urges secreted in the heart of the sun-flower,
 Hymns limned in her petalled gold.

Darkness massed on darkness has burst all on a sudden :
 Eyes once closed open to the Lightning's flare ;

SILENCE

In silence move the stars,
 In silence mounts the sap within the plant,
 The secret energies of Nature work and create in the deeps of silence.
 Out of the uttermost stillness the whirling universe was born —
 All the turmoil and tumult, the roar and fury that meet the eye
 Flourish upon an unfathomed quiet below.
 In the tranquillity of death a new birth prepares itself,
 The gathered calm of Night's ending ushers in the rejuvenated Sun....
 And were my wild senses to turn back, they would face the abysmal
 silence of the soul.

The cry of the heart shoots up like a column of silence—
 That voice alone reaches straight to the High Throne and moves it to grace.
 The gods descend along a path of luminous silence spread in the
 farthest spaces of our inmost being.

THE MARCH INTO THE NIGHT

Endless, endless; labours the way:

Its meanderings seem always to come back near to the same old familiar spot.

We have travelled through long ages and countless lives,

Through immemorial vistas of Time, as though through all the
length of Eternity—

And yet see we not the same old sun jogging up and down

Between its same old prison bars?

The lone luminaries afar that appear so close to the very heart of
the Great Mystery,

Twinkle and blink as inconsciently as ever;

The cold and barren face of the moon stares as bland and stupid as its wont;

The same old shadow still lingers at our feet and entangles them inexorably;

And the eternal viper remains coiled fast into the darkness of our entrails..

The march of aeons has brought us none the nearer to Light or Deliverance.

Ah, Soul, we have indeed progressed into obscurity,

Into a deeper and deeper gloom have we entered—

Yet who is this intrepid voyager that has dared the other Unknown, the
nether profundities?

It is thou, O my Soul, it is the Light itself, the beacon from above!

For whither else could Progress lie?

Towards Light and more Light?

But the Soul is All-Light and needs no illumination;

It is Darkness that yearns for the Light

And so the Soul has descended in answer

Into the gloom—

The gloom stretches interminable,

The abyss seems fathomless,—

Only to the spirit that ventures with its own lantern;

But my Soul is never alone—the Mother of Light upbears it—

A cataract of limitless blaze swirls behind

And presses it forward in and through the gloom

That will roll out and melt,

Sooner perhaps than one may believe,—

The Soul and gloom and all—

Right on the other side

Into the free and infinite and sheer translucence.

THE SLEEPING LION

O Sleeping Lion in the caverned darkness
Of the rock-heart of every sentient thing!
Give us thy glance, if only for a moment,
Of a child upgazing in its slumbering.

Unleash high vision's flood pent in thy conscious
Sleep—lone, abysmal—startling our surface moods
Of swoon and quiver: thrill our eyes with lustres
From thy multitudinous Dream which o'er us broods.

O shake but once thy golden mane majestic,
Toss once thy head pillowed in the plumbless deep.
The mighty toss of a child-head in slumber,—
Then from the frozen summit of thy Sleep

Shall start a flaming avalanche whose momentum
Newborn shall cleave out for the wistful dark
Earth's waylost destiny a marvel orbit
Changing to gold its wheelings void of spark.

From out thy unflawed bliss of Sleep in voiceless
Caverns for once emit thy sound of thunder
Like a child's rapt laughter roaming still in dreamland,
Steeped in a world of happiness and wonder.

For then thy leonine cry shall in a moment
Expunge from earth's death-haunted consciousness
Our starless sorrow: O let life float on nectarous
Oceans in Immortality's caress.

TRIPLE TREMOLO

A mystic land, a world of magic wonder;
 A picture painted with subtle light and shade;
A white-moon lotus of deep and delicate splendour;
 A rainbow-romance — a rose of passion-red;
A land of light with a delightful play;
 A festival manifested with heavenly claim;—
Descending showers that make to blossom the clay,
 An eveless and a sleepless sunfire flame;
A land of earth with many laughs and tears
 Churned and cherished in the bosom of a yearning source,
Through the mortal game immortal experience bears
 And pulls at the sky with giant cords of force.
O Painter and Poet-musician of my human birth,
I am tuned in thy tremolo of dreamland, heaven and earth.

DESCENT

My consciousness flows like a wide and glowing river;
 The gloomy tide is now a splendour-gleam!
Thou hast come and thriven in me, O rhythm-giver,
 I brim with thy full-mooned creative dream.
 In my bosom's secret core
 Thou hast opened a radiant door
 And through it vast melodies pour :
A gold descent with heavenly murmur, an angel-stream.
The world of clay bears a gorgeous change
 While round her neck I wreath a sun-garland
Of amaranth glory. Far chanting fiery and strange
 Starry notes flame through each earthly strand.
 O trivial creatures of flesh
 In pleasure's dim painful mesh,
 I shall make you bright and fresh
And free, with the marvel touch of a mighty lustrous hand.
The pale gray and black dry thorns upon the way
 Under my tread blossom to beaming rays.
The Universe is a lyre that tunes a play,
 Fragrant with my heart's rosary of godly grace.
 I have shattered the hard rocky prison,
 Like a spring my spirit has risen
 And flooded the desert horizon;
My life illumines the death-dark night of time and space.

THE BABY-BARD

Now that I have been made Thy baby-bard
By Thee, sweet Mother! Queen of Poesy!
The music of my soul what can retard?
Its rhythms shall flow to Thee unceasingly.

Deep in my rocky heart asleep, imprisoned,
The yearning springs of love's devoted dream
Have heard the call of the Mother-Ocean, visioned
With wonder-thrills, and so to it they stream.

Their rippling joy has now become a lyre
Wherein Thou pourest the sweetest of Thy great
Celestial music-soul of Godward fire
Whose strength can swiftly break the chains of Fate.

My lyre is Thine, upon it Thou may'st play
By day, by night, according to Thy will.
It should be faithful to Thy notes, I pray,
Till choosest Thou to make it sweetly still.

Thy baby-bard shall then repose in Thine
Ambrosial heart of love, without a care,
And all his soul shall melt in bliss divine
Which now with music fills our earthly air.

QUATRAINS

- I I think the famed philosopher's stone is
 A dreamful myth; unless it truly be
 The crystal beauty of Thy feet I kiss;
 Its touch into a god transforming me.
- II Like a lily on a stirless moonlit night
 O let my heart remain entranced in Thee;
 A stainless flower of beauty crystal-white,
 My prayer fulfilled, Thy grace abloom in me!
- III A steadfast mind, a faithful loving heart,
 A willing ever ready hand to serve,
 Let me have these alone as life's true part,
 Which for Thee, Mother, I would fain reserve.

- IV There is but one way to be happy here
In a world of misery and vengeful strife;
And 'tis with a faithful ardour to adhere
To the Mother's feet, refuge and hope of life.
- V Who serves Thee, Mother, serves himself in fact;
For when a heart of love spontaneously
Translates itself into an offered act,
Enrapt in bliss it meets Eternity.
- VI How much I am indebted to Thee, Mother!
No one can say; but one thing I do know,
A million births, one following the other,
Can free me not from what to Thee I owe.
- VII A life of service wholly dedicated
To the pleasure of Thy Truth-born will benign,
Is the only thing that I can love-dictated
Lay at Thy feet of beauty crystalline.
- VIII No thought of self, no thought of me and mine
Shall be allowed to stain the purity
Of loving consecration, Mother Divine!
That day by day shall bring me nearer Thee.
- IX No movement shall have sanction to survive
Unless it be truth's rhythm with but one aim
Of bringing up my yearning being to live
In light and love and the music of Thy name,
- X To be at Thy feet is to be at the crest
Of the highest of heavens of love and of light;
Where blossoms of beauty and bliss crown the guest,
No longer a victim of Death and the Night.

IN THE DEEP

Dancing, dancing, dancing
This peacock within my heart—
He sleeps not, he is in ecstasy.
Prancing, prancing, prancing
This horse within my self —
He stops not, he is in ecstasy.

Burning, burning, burning
The sacrificial fire within—
It stops not, it is eternal.
Smiling, smiling, smiling
At all these things within
Is my Self, the old eternal Self.

THE FACE OF MY MASTER

As a house built of marble
In the midst of many huts of mud
Out-grandeurs all that multitude —

So does the face of my Master
Out-grandeur this universe
Of a myriad suns.

LOOK !

Look overhead,
Look underfoot.
The sun and the earth
Are tired not,
And you are tired, man !

What is the reason you forget
Your parenthood?

Are you not the timeless father
Of the sun and the earth?

Look in front,
Look behind.
The old eternal space
Is laughing loud,
And you are crying, man !

Are you younger than this space ?
What secret sin
Keeps you groping in darkness ?

Look within,
Look without.
Your own creation is dancing round,
And you are gloomy, man !

THE MORNING STAR

Far hast thou travelled from Light's unseen plane
Bringing the dawn-ray of Eternity.
But oft thy missioned gaze has sought in vain
My sleep-bound eyes through windows barred to thee.

Life after life, into mortality's sway
I fall; but still thou seekest me every morn,
Luring my soul to find the heavenward way,
A sudden glimmer in a heart forlorn,

Star-pointing to the endless joy of love
That leans towards earth from the Unknown above.

AN ECHO

An echo from thy honied flute
Comes floating over earth's agonies;
It fills my heart with a longing mute,
The dream of a joy that never dies.

It brings from far enchanting shades
A tune of Love's eternal play
In groves where the full moon never fades
And blossomed cheeks have no decay.

THE GUIDE

O Guide of the Way, how far is it? still how far?
He whose sweet flute-call I hear within my heart,
And it fills my soul with yearnings unknown,
Is this the path where he shall meet my sight?

—“No other path is there.”

The farther I advance the longer stretches the road,
Tired are my mind and body. Is it so, alas,
That all my life must be spent? Is there not an easier way
Known to thee, O my Guide?

—“No other path is there.”

The unfenced desert spreads its waste of fire,
No food is here for my hunger, no water for my thirst,
Insurmountable rise the mountains, violent is the speed of the rivers;
O Friend, is this indeed the path ?

—“No other path is there.”

Many gilded illusions come that charm the heart
And they put out the Light on the Way, enemies numberless
Shoot from day to day their arrows, and escape there is none;

—“This path by which thou must go—

No other path is there.”

Who art thou that art ever by my side and givest comfort and

assurance?

Thy gaze mixes with mine, O thou Compassionate,
And all sorrow is forgotten at thy touch,
Thy path I will follow,

—No other path is there.

Oh, my thirsting soul has recognised thee,
Thine the sound of the flute, sweet like a cascade of nectar;
Cast off thy disguise, hide thyself from me no more—
All my journeying ends today at thy feet, O Beloved!

(Translated by Nolini Kanto Gupta from Bengali)

O, aurcoled supreme King,
Poet-Seer,
Warrior brave,
Humble Guru,
God incarnate,
Thy spirit I invoke
To fill my empty cup.

High-throned Emperor
On whom Infinity waits like a slave,
Drinker of light
From whom the sun steals its gold,
The earth's beggar child,
Heaven's only heir,
Preserver of the seen and the unseen worlds,
Maker and lover of the blind hungry souls,
I prostrate before Thee.

Poet, creator of burning words,
Words that burn the walls
And bring to birth the glorious visions,
Words that lift the mind to loftiest heights,
Fill the crumbled heart with might
And strengthen the weak nerves of mortality,
Words that unite in one harmony of the All-Beautiful and Joy
eternal.

O Seer of the spotless Sources,
Discharger of steed-messengers, winged and glowing white,
I kiss Thy feet,

Warrior dauntless and alone —

At whose birth-cry dark spirits trembled in their caves long secure —

Advancing with ears ever-awake to the heart of things,

Dispelling with deep sight the tangled illusion of desires,

Uprooting huge-bodied fears,

Mercilessly slaying, conquering and advancing with steps firm and
banner high,

Gathering new strength, conquering hidden vistas,

Unfailing and shooting straight Thy will's arrow to its target,

Marching to the top of the worlds

With eyes lustrous and laughing countenance,

Warrior untiring,

I bow to Thee.

O Guru of wisdom great and patience infinite,

Firmly seated over the expanding universe,

Surveyor of the intricate structure of the seven-world mansion,

New-born and young, ancient and eternal,

Dear friend, guiding father and loving mother in one,

Silent teacher,

I offer my salutations to Thee.

O God in human guise,

Thou art verily the Limitless,

For Thou art busy with the impossible —

Filling shadowy forms with substance of Bliss.

Thou art that Free One,

For in Thy freedom Thou bowest down like a humble servant

To Truth Thy self-law.

O Immutable in mutable shape,

I embrace Thy feet.

YOU HAVE BUILT A NEW MANSION OF LOVE

You have built a new mansion of Love
With walls of free winged winds
All-blissful and all-embracing :
And with pillars of roses
Self-luminous and self-rooted
You have supported the dome of an unrealisable curve :
And its seven wide halls of Peace
You have peopled with stars —
Delivered children of the Ignorance :
And the white Mother of Truth
All-light-crowned
You have enthroned as Queen.

Moved by your mysterious command,
Like waves of a sea of bliss
The children dance
And weave moon-webs and sun-webs
With songs of silver joys and golden dreams
And play an unending game of adorning
With wreaths of light immaculate —
Each for himself and all as one —
The sole,
The beauteous Queen of the Halls.
But why have you lost yourself in the Silence beyond this great
 symphony ?
O why have you hidden yourself behind the white Mother's heart
 of glory,
Away from love's worshipping eyes,
O love's supreme Lord ?

RANI MAITRA

PEARL-MOON

(A Song)

A pearl-moon's lisp of light
In my heart's mystic night,
 I search for her in secret tears, alone.
I have seen beauty's hints
In a million faery tints :
 She my life's lotus-flame, my very own.

A vision comes in dream —
In trance, a sudden gleam :
 On earth's marge embosomed her moment's form I capture :
In the star awaked by love,
Glimmering through clouds above
 Is the gold-trail of the Beloved's rapture .

(Translated by Dilip Kumar Roy from Bengali)

EXPECTANT

Thou gavest me hope that thou wouldst come,
Yet still remainest veiled, withdrawn,
Making me on the wayside wait
Wistful—the livelong day alone !

The deep of my abysmal heart
Is lit with an immortal flame
Revealing in its glow of gold
Thy advent's pledge signed with thy name.

That promise to our shadowy world
Brings some far sweep of bliss and bloom :
Its inky clouds are touched with thrills
Of lightning—thy answer of fire to its gloom.

And yet through aeons I had to bide
My time for thee from birth to birth :
Fulfil my dream of countless lives,
A flash of thy beauty upon earth.

(Translated by Dilip Kumar Roy from Bengali)

SANCTUARY

My dream-city of blanched flat roofs!—
When the gigantic equatorial moon
Comes out from her portals like a priestess queen,
And stills the aching flesh to an incensed swoon....

I sit in a corner of the sun-baked courtyard
That is mercifully wrapt in the cool coming night.
And the candle that is lit in the depth of my heart
Revives its flame in the absence of light.

Though wide awake, I sleep in my being—
Plumb deeper and deeper a cavernlike space....
The bare floor hurts me with a limitless joy,
And the eyes, trance-burdened, are sealed in my face.

My limbs feel heavy with a peace-numbered languor,
As if turned to stone in a timeless relief;
Yet the body is sundered by a subtle knife
And a pouring consciousness boundless though brief.

REMEMBRANCE

The wind keeps knocking at my door
With cool and mystic words untouched by the sun,
When the cattle trudge sleepily to the mountain pastures
Through a misty memory of Brindavun.

The wind is full of soft whisperings—
My window is tapped by the blue hand of dawn.
In my ears is the dull hoof-crunch of the village cattle
Followed ever by a radiant boy from centuries gone.

The wind calls in a thousand voices,
Each breath remembers an ancient music mute;
The vague trees thrill with uncontainable fervour,
To the wandering echo of a deathless flute.

SILVER GRACE

A love has sealed us one with paradise—
A kiss of crescent moon upon earth's soul
By virgin raptures dreaming in the blue
That even the pit of hell is a buried sky.
No warrior gold can pierce the veil of time;
For God's own glory here has sunk asleep,
And how shall that abyss of majesty
Brook from its summit-self a lash of light?
Therefore this love's seducing glimmer came,
This haloed serpent of the Infinite,
A white bliss curving through our blinded deeps
To give the darkness' mouth a shadowless smile.

SAVITRI "

A rose of dawn, her smile lights every gaze—
Her love is like a nakedness of noon:
No flame but breathes in her the Spirit's calm
And pours the omnipresence of a sun.
Her tongues of fire break from a voiceless deep
Dreaming the taste of some ineffable height—
A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all,
A universal hunger's white embrace
That from the Unknown leaps burning to the Unknown.

PRAYER

There is no lack of love in Thee,
But, O sweet Splendour, bless
My proud heart with a penury
Of dedicated emptiness.

Thy blue and gold and silver light
Can never cease to drop,
For Thou hast generously made
All heaven a wide inverted cup.

'Tis we are shut in outward self
Nor deepen eyes to see
That dawn and vesper, noon and night
Are pouring Thy divinity.

AGNI

Not from the day but from the night he's born,
Night with her pang of dream — star on pale star
Winging strange rumour through a secret dawn.
For all the black uncanopied spaces mirror
The brooding distance of our plumbless mind :
O depth of gloom, reveal thy unknown light—
Awake our body to the alchemic touch
Of the great God who comes with minstrel hands !....

Lo now my heart has grown his glimmering East :
Blown by his breath a cloud of colour runs :
The yearning curves of life are lit to a smile.
O mystic sun, arise upon our thought
And with thy gold omnipotence make each face
The centre of some blue infinitude !

DISLOYALTY

Sweet Calm ! forgive the many times I hurled
My hard undreamful glance upon Thy face :
Forgive the irreparable nights and days
I gloried in Thy farness from the world.
Forgive the folly that pronounced Thee far—
Thou whom all creatures breathe or else they die :
Life of our life, yet hidden to our eye
Because we have forgotten that each scar

Brim with Thy God-hue, just as every glow
Of joy is but Thy blossoming in our heart !
Even forgive sad hours when all too low
And earth-born I have felt, deeming Thou wert
Too heaven-high—as if time-changes could
Mar my soul's birth from Thy eternal Motherhood !

MUKTI

What deep dishonour that the soul should have
Its passion moulded by a moon of change
And all its massive purpose be a wave
Ruled by time's gilded glammers that estrange
Being from its true goal of motionless
Eternity ecstatic and alone,
Poised in calm plenitudes of consciousness—
A sea unheard where spume nor spray is blown

Be still, oceanic heart, withdraw thy sense
From fickle lure of outward fulgencies.
Clasp not in vain the myriad earth to appease
The hunger of thy God-profundities :
Not there but in self-rapturous suspense
Of all desire is thy omnipotence !

Two Letters from Sri Aurobindo

SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION.

There have been times when the seeking for spiritual attainment was, at least in certain civilisations, more intense and widespread than now or rather than it has been in the world in general during the past few centuries. For now the curve seems to be the beginning of a new turn of seeking which takes its start from what was achieved in the past and projects itself towards a greater future. But always, even in the age of the Vedas or in Egypt, the spiritual achievement or the occult knowledge was confined to a few, it was not spread in the whole mass of humanity. The mass of humanity evolves slowly, containing in itself all stages of the evolution from the material and the vital man to the mental man. A small minority have pushed beyond the barriers, opening the doors to occult and spiritual knowledge and preparing the ascent of the evolution beyond mental man into spiritual and supramental being. Sometimes this minority has exercised an enormous influence as in Vedic India, Egypt or, according to tradition, in Atlantis, and determined the civilisation of the race, giving it a strong stamp of the spiritual or the occult; sometimes they have stood apart in their secret schools or orders, not directly influencing a civilisation which was sunk in material ignorance or in chaos and darkness or in the hard external enlightenment which rejects spiritual knowledge.

The cycles of evolution tend always upward, but they are cycles and do not ascend in a straight line. The process therefore gives the impression of a series of ascents and descents, but what is essential in the gains of the evolution is kept or, even if eclipsed for a time, re-emerges in new forms suitable to the new ages.

The Creation has descended all the degrees of being from the Supermind to Matter and in each degree it has created a world, reign, plane or order proper to that degree. In the creating of the material world there was a plunge of this descending Consciousness into an apparent Inconscience and an emergence of it out of that Inconscience, degree by degree, until it recovers its

highest spiritual and supramental summits and manifests their powers here in Matter. But even in the Inconscience there is a secret Consciousness which works, one may say, by an involved and hidden Intuition proper to itself. In each stage of matter, in each stage of life, this Intuition assumes a working proper to that stage and acts from behind the veil, supporting and enforcing the immediate necessities of the creative Force. There is an Intuition in Matter which holds the action of the material Energy together and dictates the organisation of the material world from the electron to the sun and planets and their contents. There is an Intuition in Life which similarly supports and guides the play and development of Life in matter till it is ready for the mental evolution of which man is the vehicle. In man also the creation follows the same upward process, — the Intuition within develops according to the stage he has reached in his progress. Even the precise intellect of the scientist, who is inclined to deny the separate existence or the superiority of Intuition yet cannot really move forward unless there is behind him a mental Intuition, which enables him to take a forward step or to divine what has to be done. Intuition therefore is present at the beginning of things and in their middle as well as at their consummation.

But Intuition takes its proper form only when one goes beyond the mental into the spiritual domain, for there only it comes fully forward from behind the veil and reveals its true and complete nature. Along with the mental evolution of man there has been going forward the early process of another evolution which prepares the spiritual and supramental being. This has had two lines, one the discovery of the occult forces secret in Nature and of the hidden planes and worlds concealed from us by the world of Matter and the other the discovery of man's soul and spiritual self. If the tradition of Atlantis is correct, it is that of a progress which went to the extreme of occult knowledge, but could go no farther. In the India of Vedic times we have the record left of the other line of achievement, that of spiritual self-discovery; occult knowledge was there but kept subordinate. We may say that here in India the reign of Intuition came first, intellectual Mind developing afterwards in the later philosophy and science. But in fact the mass of men at the time, it is quite evident, lived entirely on the material plane, worshipped the Godheads of material Nature, sought from them entirely material objects. The effort of the Vedic mystics revealed to them the things behind, through a power of inner sight and hearing and experience which was confined to a

limited number of seers and sages and kept carefully secret from the mass of humanity—secrecy was always insisted on by the mystic. We may, very well attribute this flowering of Intuition on the spiritual plane to a rapid re-emergence of essential gains brought down from a previous cycle. If we analyse the spiritual history of India we shall find that after reaching this height there was a descent which attempted to take up each lower degree of the already evolved consciousness and link it to the spiritual at the summit. The Vedic age was followed by a great outburst of intellect and philosophy which yet took spiritual truth as its basis and tried to reach it anew, not through a direct Intuition or occult process as did the Vedic seers, but by the power of the mind's reflective, speculative, logical thought; at the same time processes of Yoga were developed which used the thinking mind as a means of arriving at spiritual realisation, spiritualising this mind itself at the same time. Then followed an era of the development of philosophies and Yoga processes which more and more used the emotional and aesthetic being as the means of spiritual realisation and spiritualised the emotional level in man, through the heart and feeling. This was accompanied by Tantric and other processes which took up the mental will, the life-will, the will of sensations and made them at once the instruments and the field of spiritualisation. In the Hathayoga and the various attempts at divinisation of the body there is also a life of endeavour which attempted to arrive at the same achievement with regard to living matter; but this still awaits the discovery of the true characteristic method and power of Spirit in the body. We may say therefore that the universal Consciousness after its descent into Matter has conducted the evolution there along two lines, one of ascent to the discovery of the self and Spirit, the other of descent through the already evolved levels of mind, life and body so as to bring down the spiritual consciousness into these also and to fulfil thereby some secret intention in the creation of the material universe. Our Yoga is in its principle a taking up and summarising and completing of this process, an endeavour to rise to the highest possible supramental level and bring down its consciousness and power into mind, life and body.

The condition of present-day civilisation, materialistic with an externalised intellect and life-endeavour, which you find so painful, is an episode, but one which was perhaps inevitable. For if the spiritualisation of the mind, life and body is the thing to be achieved, the conscious presence of the Spirit

even in the physical consciousness and material body, an age which puts matter and the physical life in the forefront and devotes itself to the effort of the intellect to discover the truth of material existence, had perhaps to come. On one side, by materialising everything up to the intellect itself it has created the extreme difficulty of which you speak for the spiritual seeker; but on the other hand it has given the life in matter an importance which the spirituality of the past was inclined to deny it. In a way it has made the spiritualisation of it a necessity for spiritual seeking and so aided the descent movement of the evolving spiritual consciousness in the earth nature. More than that we cannot claim for it ; its conscious effect has been rather to stifle and almost extinguish the spiritual element in humanity : it is only by the divine use of the pressure of contraries and an intervention from above that there will be the spiritual outcome.

THE CENTRAL PROCESS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

If one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purifying of the heart and develop the sadhana and give the necessary experiences, it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than relying on one's own efforts alone and this implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving. It is in fact the principle of sadhana that I myself followed and it is the central part of Yoga as I envisage it. It is, I suppose, what Sri Ramkrishna meant by the method of the baby cat in his image. But all cannot follow that at once; it takes time for them to arrive at it—it grows most when the mind and vital fall quiet.

What I mean by surrender is this inner surrender of the mind and vital. There is, of course, the outer surrender also: the giving up of all that is found to conflict with the spirit or need of the sadhana, the offering, the obedience to the guidance of the Divine, whether directly, if one has reached that stage, or through the psychic or to the guidance of the Guru. I may say that *prayopaveshana** has not anything to do with surrender: it is a form of

* Fasting for a long time

THE CENTRAL PROCESS OF THE INTEGRAL YOGA

tapasya of a very austere and in my opinion very excessive kind, often dangerous.

The core of the inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude: "I want the Divine and nothing else. I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way; let him do all in his own time and way. I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delays, relying on him and never giving up. Let my mind be quiet and trust him and let him open it to his light; let my vital be quiet and turn to him alone and let him open it to his calm and joy. All for him and myself for him. Whatever happens I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done."

That is the attitude into which one must grow: for certainly it cannot be made perfect at once — mental and vital movements come across — but if one keeps the will to it, it will grow in the being. The rest is a matter of obedience to the guidance when it makes itself manifest, not allowing one's mental and vital movements to interfere.

It is not my intention to say that this way is the only way and sadhana cannot be done otherwise — there are so many others by which one can approach the Divine. But this is the only one I know by which the taking up of sadhana by the Divine becomes a sensible fact before the preparation of the nature is done. In other methods the Divine action may be felt from time to time, but it remains mostly behind the veil till all is ready. In some sadhanas the divine action is not recognised: all must be done by tapasya. In most there is a mixing of the two: the tapasya finally calling the direct help and intervention. The idea and experience of the Divine doing all belong to the Yoga based on surrender. But whatever way is followed, the one thing to be done is to be faithful and go on to the end.

All can be done by the Divine: the heart and nature purified, the inner consciousness awakened, the veils removed, if one gives oneself to the Divine with trust and confidence and even if one cannot do so fully at once, yet

the more one does so, the more the inner help and guidance comes and the experience of the Divine grows within. If the questioning mind becomes less active and humility and the will to surrender grow, this ought to be perfectly possible. No other strength and tapasya are then needed, but this alone.

What is Sri Aurobindo Doing ?

It is now more than thirty years since Sri Aurobindo 'retired' from the active field of life and for about the last twenty years the only apparent contact that he has kept up with the world is of allowing a slowly increasing number of persons to have a momentary glimpse of him on three (now four) occasions in the year. Except for granting *darsan* on these occasions to some people he remains in total 'seclusion' all the time. Before he took to this 'seclusion' he was known all over India for his inspiring idealism, his eminence in learning, his passionate patriotism, his illustrious political career and above all his pure and lofty character. What made him so abruptly terminate his public life and withdraw so entirely into complete 'seclusion'? What has he been doing for all these more than thirty years alone in his 'retirement'? These are the questions which almost every one asks whenever there is any mention of Sri Aurobindo.

The only obvious explanation that commends itself to most of the people is that it was the evident strain of intense idealism and spirituality in Sri Aurobindo's temperament that ultimately drew him away from the active field of life into the life of exclusive contemplation. This is admirable indeed for his own self but of what good is it to the world? Spirit is not of this earth and as of old the seekers after Spirit turn away from the world; they gain their own deliverance from earthly suffering but humanity is left to revolve helplessly on its wheel of blind suffering as ever. Of what avail is the spiritual salvation of pure and noble characters like Sri Aurobindo to the sorrow-stricken humanity?

It seems to be the consensus of opinion about Sri Aurobindo that he has retired from the pain and struggle of life into the ever-alooof silent Spirit, withdrawn from the toil and turmoil of worldly action into the untrammelled stillness of the pure Self. He must have gained his own liberation, no doubt, but the suffering of mankind leaves him either unconcerned or helpless. Perhaps even the slightest contact with the world disturbs the pure serenity of his

soul or perhaps all this worldly agitation appears to his liberated spirit utterly meaningless and futile or even totally unreal. Or, perhaps the bliss of the Spirit is so absorbing, so completely seizing and engrossing that having once tasted it one cares little for all this pain and clash of earthly life. Whatever the real reason, the fact seems clear to most people that Sri Aurobindo is utterly lost to the world and is of no help to its pressing problems, its acute difficulties and its overwhelming catastrophes. No doubt, now and then the world gets a book from him, but are not his books a clear indication of his temperament and attitude? For, what are these books about? Philosophy, poetry, yoga. Can there be any subjects less concerned with the actual and practical problems of mankind than these? Was it not an eminent philosopher himself who said that "philosophy bakes no man's bread" and another who observed that it does not stop even a tooth-ache? And poetry? What else does it do but create fanciful pictures of our dreams and imaginations? These are pleasing indeed, but can the world ever be saved by pleasant dreams and colourful imaginations? And what can be more escapist than yoga? Is not its sole concern a single-minded pursuit of a Reality other than this actual and a decisive casting off of this earthly existence by a complete merging in that Reality?

But even to say that Sri Aurobindo is lost to the world because he is absorbed in the Spirit may seem, to those who do not believe in the reality of the Spirit, too much of a concession to him. If reality is ultimately material, then all those who seek it by entering into their own deeper spiritual self are only "blind men seeking in a dark room for a black cat that does not exist." The pursuit moreover is not only futile but, on the showing of psycho-analysis, extremely unwholesome because such pursuit only indicates an attempt at vicarious wish-fulfilment of suppressed libidinous propensities or an escape into subjective self-delusions by hypochondriac introverts or morbid neurotics. Did not an Indian writer recently conclude after psycho-analysing Buddha that he (Buddha, of course, not the writer) was a neurotic and his whole philosophy only a subjective structure of a high-strung introvert? If Spirit is only an illusion created by mentally deranged persons, then Sri Aurobindo cannot deserve any credit whatsoever; he is not only lost to the world, he is also lost to himself.

To an inquiring mind, however, the question remains: Can we dismiss so easily (with distant appreciation or pity) a person of such magnitude and

calibre as Sri Aurobindo ? Are there not pointers in his life and character and his writings which might lead to a different conclusion ?

A proper answer to this specific question about Sri Aurobindo really rests upon our view of a more general issue—the issue of the dynamic action of the Spirit in the world, its effectivity or otherwise in dealing with the actual and pressing problems of humanity. Is Spirit altogether other-worldly, a total negation of all earthly life, a complete and radical opposite of terrestrial existence or, though different from the world, is yet intimately connected with it and directly concerned with its conditions and in possession of adequate power to deal with them ? Is Spirit only an aloof and incommunicable stillness or is it an effective power too ? Is it merely a detached and relationless pure self-existence or an upholding, directing and ruling power also ? We shall have first to decide this general question before we can adequately deal with the question of Sri Aurobindo's work and its significance.

Largely owing to the influence of modern thought which has strongly tended towards materialism but also, to some extent, for want of any overt indication of the action of the Spirit on world-events, most of the intelligent people nowadays find it difficult to believe at all in God or Spirit and even those who believe in Him find it impossible to consider Him as an active agent in the affairs of the world. The fact that evil triumphs over good and prospers while good is mostly powerless and has to suffer makes most people think that either there is no God or even if He exists He is not concerned with what happens in the world, or if concerned, is incapable of undoing the evil that so preponderantly afflicts the whole earth. He may be a pure and benevolent being but is really ineffective, incompetent to resist, let alone triumph over the power of evil. The perpetrators of evil have apparently not to reckon with God.

This issue has become all the more acute at the present moment when the major part of the world has been turned into a veritable inferno by the rise to power of a type that has used the force of evil to a degree that has no precedence in the history of mankind. The ethicists and religionists—the keepers of mankind's conscience—have not been able to check the rising tide of this force which has spread over half the world and in which a little while back the whole of humanity was in danger of being engulfed. If the prospects are now more

hopeful it is necessary to keep in mind that the dictator-type with which we are now quite familiar may not be the culminating point, the final word of the embodied evil power; it is not unlikely that it may be only a precursor of yet more destructive and diabolical types to come. For surely, however, unprecedented and stupendous the force used by the dictators may be, it is as G  rald Heard points out, to a large extent gross and inept. It is not unlikely that the future diabolical types might use the force of evil in more subtle, more precise and apt ways and consequently may prove far more destructive than the present dictators. What answer can those who strive for humanity's good can give to this challenge from the side of evil? It is all too clear that the pacifists, the ethicists and the religionists have failed and will ever fail us for the simple reason that however good their intentions may be, they do not have adequate power to cope with the swelling power of evil. There is now no escape from the conclusion arrived at from the bitter experience of recent years that mere goodwill is not enough; if it is to be effective it must have adequate power to stand against and triumph over the forces that oppose and seek to destroy it. This inevitable necessity so far neglected or glossed over by the ethically and religiously minded people has now become acutely clear. But along with the realisation of this need the sense of helplessness has also become clear, and frank and honest persons have admitted their incompetence to deal with the catastrophic conditions in which the entire humanity has been thrown by the uprise of unimaginable extremes of evil power. Since the ethicists and religionists have failed us, can the mystics—the trained in the life of the Spirit—help? Can they who are in direct contact with the Spirit bring forth from it apt and adequate power to salvage the foundering humanity? Can they accept the challenge thrown by the dictator-type and the yet more diabolical types that may possibly follow him and answer it successfully? The need is extreme; the fate of the whole humanity is in question; can they rise to the occasion?

It needs to be made perfectly clear here that if the mystics are to succeed in their attempt, they must use a different kind of force, utilise different kinds of means and adopt different types of methods to achieve their end than those used by the perpetrators of evil. As Gerald Heard says, the means determine the ends; if the mystics use the same means as the dictators have used—unimaginable extremes of brutal violence, cunning, treachery—then even

if they succeed it will be the victory of the principles of evil. The force demanded of the mystics is therefore of a radically different kind than that which works through the dictators. Can the mystics yield such force? Does such force exist in the Spirit?

To find a proper answer to these questions we must turn to the subject of spiritual psychology or mysticism and examine the possibilities of the dynamic spiritual development of our being. The very first thing that strikes us on even a cursory understanding of mysticism is that the capacity of knowledge and action on ourselves and others that we normally possess can be increased to an extraordinary degree if we probe the depths of our hidden inner being and tap its resources which are not ordinarily available to us as our surface consciousness has no direct contact with it. This inner being now concealed from us has in it unused reservoirs of knowledge and power of immensely greater magnitude and range than those possessed by our surface consciousness. Modern psychologists have admitted the existence of a layer of consciousness below the surface mind but they have termed it "sub-conscious mind" because they have found that it is less aware of itself and the world than the surface mind and that though in a way it is more powerful than the surface mind its power is of a very blind and gross type. In fact they have found that this sub-conscious mind is a most dark and unwholesome region of our hidden being whose influence on our conscious nature is not only undesirable but often perilous. This finding by the modern psychologists after an exploration of our concealed inner being has been responsible for the predominant feeling in the minds of most people (including the educated and the cultured) that any serious interest in one's own inner self and any attempt to enter into a dynamic contact with it can result only in an upsurge of the harmful subconscious forces and an enwrapment of the conscious mind's light and judgment by these dark and dangerous nether influences. That is why the teaching of the modern psychologist is to become as 'extrovert' and 'objective' as possible and to avoid all tendency to subjective pre-occupation with one's own inner being, as such 'introversion' can only lead to morbidity and neurosis.

This attitude of the modern psychologist has proved a great hindrance to all further exploration of our inner being, for though it has admitted on the one hand a fundamental truth—that our surface-consciousness is only a

small and fragmentary portion of our total inner existence—yet on the other hand it has barred all further self-discovery in that inner being by characterising the whole of that vast concealed consciousness as an obscure “subconsciousness” inferior to our waking surface mentality. But as a matter of actual experience this description is true only of a part of our total inner existence for if in our inner self-exploration we do not stop at this sub-consciousness but go still more inward and higher we find that there are ranges in our inner being in which the consciousness is more luminous, more self-possessed, more subtle and puissant than the consciousness of our surface mind. In this inner being not only our normal capacities function with an immensely greater freedom and flexibility, amplitude and mastery but altogether new capacities of knowledge and power reveal themselves. This part of our concealed self can be called subconscious only in the sense of not being all itself on the surface and not in the sense of being in any way inferior to our surface consciousness; in fact, since it functions from behind a veil it should rather be called our subliminal self and clearly distinguished from the subconscious proper which alone is a lower and obscure province of our nature.

If we make a decisive entry into this subliminal self we find ourselves in possession not only of a greater and more direct self-knowledge and self-mastery but also in possession of a wider and more authentic world-knowledge and capable of a more directly effective world-action. The subliminal can enter into direct conscious contact with other persons and objects and events and act upon them with a direct and decisive impact of its forces. Though it may utilise and work through the surface instrumentation of knowledge and action it is not bound to use it, for it can function altogether independently of it and can produce results by an intimate and immediate action of its consciousness-force upon persons and objects and occurrences.

But the most important discovery that we make if we go sufficiently deep into our subliminal being is that just as our surface waking self is a small and fragmentary formation of a deeper and wider inner existence, this subliminal being itself is a partial and fragmentary formation of a conscious existence that is still larger and at its widest becomes cosmic in vision and power. We further realise that just as our surface consciousness can widen and identify itself with the deeper subliminal being it can also widen and

WHAT IS SRI AUROBINDO DOING ?

enlarge itself till the veils that separate it from the cosmic consciousness disappear, and it can unite itself with the cosmic consciousness. When this union is realised we are liberated from all the limitations of our small and narrow individual self, liberated from even the subtler limitations of our inner subliminal self and illimitably enlarged, become cosmic self and universal Spirit. Thus liberated we find the whole universe within our self as well as our self pervading and constituting all that is in the universe. We intimately feel our self as the self of all, know all as our self and concretely sense all beings and things and all nature as part of our being and nature. We feel and know and sense this inclusion, pervasion and identity not as an ideative perception but as a concrete certitude and reality of conscious experience. Further, we not only realise cosmic self and consciousness but also assume cosmic nature. The entire universal action is intimately felt as happening within our widened self and we become capable (more or less according to the extent of enlargement of our consciousness) of directly comprehending and effectively influencing and directing universal forces and movements. We have a clear and immediate awareness of the multitudinous universal forces and beings that secretly influence the world-events and can decisively interfere, overrule, control and turn them to the best purpose. This we can do because we come in possession of a Will and a Power that has no limits of individuality but is cosmic in its range and potency. Our action on the world events ceases to be conditioned by our personal capacities; the personal formation loses its limits and turns into a centre or a free and open channel through which the Divine Cosmic will works unhindered.

We thus find that in the totality of our being there are parts other than the subconscient (which alone the modern psychologist has discovered) in which the hampering limitations of our surface being are reduced and overpassed. But even the subliminal and the cosmic being which we have considered do not cover the whole of our concealed inner being nor do they exhaust all the possibilities of inner self-discovery. For a complete account of our total being and a complete discovery of all the regions of our secret self-existence we must probe yet deeper and climb still higher than we have done.

If we carry our inner self-exploration still further we find that as our subliminal being at its widest enters into the cosmic consciousness so also at its

deepest it discovers the psychic being or the soul and at its highest it rises to the transcendent superconscious Spirit. This psychic being which is the true and undying person supporting the subliminal and surface flux of our various personalities and the infinite superconscious Spirit which we vaguely call 'God' are both to be taken into account if we are to have a total and integral realisation of our true self-existence.

When having discovered our imperishable soul and enlarged it with the experience of the cosmic consciousness on the mind-level we rise towards the supreme pinnacles of the superconscious self—we come in direct contact with the infinite Light and Power of the pure Spirit. Not only our power for world-action is boundlessly enlarged but our dependence on any external means or methods for making that action effective is more and more diminished till it altogether disappears. We become capable of mastering and ruling the entire cosmic movement solely by inner spiritual means and methods. Even for the most decisive world-action we no longer need any outer organisation or following or require any preaching or propaganda from the pulpit, platform or press; without any necessity of meeting or speaking to people in the external field in order to help and lead them we can decisively influence, control and rule their destinies. Outwardly this would give an impression that we have totally withdrawn from the active world-scene but actually we have gained a more direct and effective control of the real forces and beings that secretly activate and influence the world-events.

This all-too-brief and most inadequate account of the possibilities of our inner self-development and the consequent illimitable increase in real knowledge and power for effective world-action will at least make it clear that those who devote themselves to the pursuit of the Spirit do not necessarily become oblivious of the world and lose all contact with its concrete problems. Though it cannot be denied that one line of spiritual development (which has been predominant in the past) does attempt such withdrawal from the world-action, that attempt is not obligatory on every spiritual seeker and the opposite attempt of effective spiritual participation in the affairs of the world is not altogether absent. In any case, the possibility of increasing our light and power to an illimitable extent by entering into our inner and higher spiritual self being always there the mystics need not feel helpless before

the acute and overwhelming difficulties of humanity, for they can always put forth effective spiritual force to alleviate and redeem them. The religionists and ethicists cannot do so because they do not attempt any direct contact with the Spirit and consequently do not command any greater force than is available on the surface of being; they have an enlightened mind and sympathetic heart but no spiritual power which can be gained only by spiritual practice aimed at opening up the hidden parts of the deeper and higher spiritual ranges of our inner being. Only the mystics make this attempt and therefore only they can take upon themselves tasks which are beyond the capacity of normal persons, however pure and good they may be.

Surely then the mystics can accept the challenge which the dictator type has flung in the face of humanity and can redeem it from the infernal chaos into which it has been thrown by the tremendous upsurge of forces of evil. However overwhelming and unprecedented this upsurge may be, the mystics can never fail in their attempt to check and frustrate it for the concrete reason that the power of evil, even when most stupendous and immense, can only be finite while the power of the Spirit though it may work within defined limits is in essence infinite. The demoniacal power even at its highest and intensest can never equal, much less surpass, the spiritual power which is in itself illimitable and fathomless. The mystics, therefore, need have no qualms before any catastrophe into which the demoniacal power might land the world, for they can wield a power that can triumph over every circumstance and situation. Their action, being spiritual and occult, may not be evident on the outer surface of life but nonetheless it can be decisively and radically effective.

If these considerations seem admissible, then to lay the charge of inaction on Sir Aurobindo who is the most dynamic of all mystics is surely more an indication of our utter ignorance of spiritual matters than an adequate estimate of his real work. As a matter of fact, though not present in the external field of world-action he may be tremendously influencing the world-events; secretly but decisively he may be controlling and mastering the real forces behind the apparent clash and confusion now rampant over the whole world and may be leading the whole humanity through all these vicissitudes to some divine goal.

What is precisely that goal ? To say that Sri Aurobindo commands superhuman spiritual power is not enough; for a correct appraisal of the signifi-

cance of his work we must inquire : to what specific use is he putting that power ? for the realisation of what high aim is he utilising that force ?

The aim of Sri Aurobindo's work can be adequately realised only if we have a clear understanding of the whole process of evolution, its true aim and means, its methods and stages. It is now generally recognised that this earth has been the scene of a vast evolutionary process which has been going on for the past many millions of years. Scientists and philosophers, materialists and idealists all agree that inconscient matter has evolved into submental life and out of submental life, after a series of evolutionary steps, has emerged self-conscious mind. Under the stress of the evolutionary urge matter has allowed the emergence of two higher principles, life and mind. But though there is this general agreement about the past of evolution there is hardly any about its future. To most people any further momentous evolutionary step such as was taken when in inanimate matter life became possible and when in a world of animals driven by sub-conscious vital urges self-conscious humanity with its power of intelligence and discriminating reason appeared seems completely improbable. The evolution from matter to mind which is an accomplished fact is admitted but any further evolution beyond mind, any further emergence of new principles and powers of existence seems most unlikely. Yet such improbability must have appeared at every critical stage of evolution before a farther stupendous step was taken by evolutionary Nature and the new emergent principle became an established fact. As Maeterlinck says, "What visitor from a neighbouring star who should have encountered our first mammals, awkward, lumbering, dull-witted creatures, would have imagined that out of these clumsinesses, these short-lived shapeless models, would be evolved, some thousands of years later, he who may still not unfairly call himself the king of our planet ? And, going even further back, who would have ventured to foresee man in the trilobites or the crustacea of the paleozoic ?"

The seeming impossibility of the emergence of a new status of existence and with it and embodying it of a new type of being—perhaps even more different from man than as man is from animal—is therefore no conclusive proof of its improbability. In fact, if we do not confine ourselves to an examination of merely the physical and outward aspects of the evolutionary process but seek for the secret meaning and hidden purpose behind it such a further evolution

seems not only not improbable but inevitable. For the essential urge behind the evolutionary process is not the creation of more and more complex physical forms for their own sake but to turn the original inconscience of matter, by a series of subconscious and partly conscious stages to complete and integral consciousness. Evidently the self-conscious mentality of man, even at its highest and widest, is not such a complete and integral consciousness; it is too much limited, bound and hampered to be considered the final stage of evolving consciousness. As mental consciousness has evolved out of a lower state of sub-mental consciousness so it must itself evolve into a higher state of supra-mental consciousness. Mind as it is cannot be the last reach of the evolutionary process there must be higher states of conscious existence beyond the mind-level that have yet to emerge in the still continuing evolutionary process.

The all-important question therefore is : what are these new principles of consciousness that are to emerge in the future evolution ? What will be their nature and characteristics ? How will they be related to the present mind-consciousness ? These questions have already been considered earlier while dealing with the as yet unknown ranges of our total consciousness. Since, as now seems clear, our further evolution is going to be principally an evolution of consciousness there can be no doubt that it will consist in the unfolding and overt realisation of the so far unevolved parts of our inner and higher being—the subliminal and the psychic, the universal and the transcendent—that are now supernormal to us.

In brief, the next step of evolution is destined to be the emergence of the Spirit in self-conscious humanity. In fact the preliminary steps of this Spiritual evolution have already been accomplished and incipient spiritual types have already appeared in the world. This spiritual evolution, however, has been till now only a secondary and subordinate development, for the main concern of evolutionary Nature till now has been the fullest development of the mind-principle. But once the mind has fully developed itself it is bound to feel its inherent insufficiency and to look beyond itself for a state of consciousness higher than its own in which its basic insufficiency is overpassed and its unrealised urge is sovereignly fulfilled. It is then that the ascent to Spirit becomes the pressing need of humanity and the predominant urge of evolution-

nary Nature ; the incipient and subordinate spiritual strain in evolution finds an opportunity to complete its development and fulfil its aim.

For, however great might have been the spiritual development of the past, it has certainly not completed itself; in fact, as Sri Aurobindo says : "the spiritual evolution of nature is still in process and incomplete—one might almost say, still only beginning." (*The Life Divine* p. 902). For this reason the full-grown spiritual type has not yet appeared on earth though with the rudimentary spiritual types whom we vaguely term 'saints' we are all familiar. It is not unlikely that when the fully developed spiritual type will appear on earth these incipient spiritual types with which we are already familiar will differ as much (and perhaps more) from him as those early prehistoric human types which the anthropologists have discovered—the Pithecanthropus, the Heidelberg and the Neandertal man—differ from a modern man with a fully developed intellect.

To take up the essentials of the spiritual evolution of the past and to carry it to its fullest and highest reach till a fully developed spiritual being is established on earth as firmly as man—the mental being—is now established on it is, then, the task which evolutionary Nature is now attempting and which, in spite of all the apparent impossibilities, she is destined to accomplish.

It might seem rather irrelevant to introduce here this discussion of the evolutionary process but, as mentioned earlier, without a clear understanding of that process and its aim and steps it is not possible correctly to estimate Sri Aurobindo's work which, it may now be stated, is none other than the successful accomplishment of the supreme task which evolutionary Nature is now attempting—the decisive emergence of the Spirit in the earth consciousness and the creation of a new spiritual type of being.

To claim for spirituality a development higher than that which has already been achieved in the past seems unwarranted even to those who believe in the Spirit. They admit the progress of spiritual evolution in the future but to them it can consist in no more than a reinstatement of past spiritual discoveries on a wider scale and adapted to new conditions and the changing temperaments of new generations. The future of spiritual evolution, according to

them, can only be the reaffirmation of the old spiritual truths after a period of eclipse due to the preponderent yet temporary influence of materialistic thought on the mind of humanity.

In Sri Aurobindo's opinion, this is taking a very limited view of the possibilities of spiritual evolution. In fact if we carefully examine the past history of that evolution we are bound to conclude that though spirituality has done great things in the past it has not yet succeeded in fulfilling its main promise—the promise of wholly divinising the human life. All that the spiritual seekers of the past have been able to do is to exercise an influence and to modify to a certain extent the earthly life subject to ignorance and suffering and death; despite their great spiritual achievements they have not been able to deliver it completely from this subjection and to transform and divinise it entirely. Even this partial result they were able to achieve in their own intensive individual practice; attempts on a wider collective scale were vitiated and frustrated after a short or a long period. It was this failure that created the prevalent tendency among the spiritual seekers of the past to discourage or even wholly abandon any large-scale spiritual endeavour and to seek only for individual spiritual liberation. This clearly indicates that there was some basic insufficiency in the spiritual achievement of the past on its dynamic side.

The importance of Sri Aurobindo's work lies precisely in that he has been able to discover a dynamic spiritual principle—what he calls the Supermind or Gnosis—which removes this basic insufficiency of the past spiritual effort and sovereignly fulfils the age-long promise which spirituality has always held forth but which it has not been able to fulfil till now. That is why Sri Aurobindo confidently insists on saying that glorious as has been the spiritual record of the past a still greater and more resplendent spiritual future is in store for humanity.

The emergence of the Supermind and its establishment in earth-nature as mind has emerged and established itself is thus the task which Sri Aurobindo is attempting; for it is only by the secure establishment of this principle in earth-nature that the evolutionary process can realise its secret urge and life on earth can totally divinise itself by changing its foundation from inconscient ignorance to superconscient Truth. Such a complete and radical reversal and conversion of the basic earth-consciousness can be accomplished

only by the action of the supramental truth-power and not by any lesser degree of spiritual force.

What is this new principle of Supermind or Gnosis? How does it differ from mental and spiritual-mental consciousness? It is difficult to answer these questions in a way that will satisfy the rational mind—because the consciousness of the supermind is so radically different from the mental and even spiritual-mental-consciousness and its action so far exceeds the action of these lesser powers that it is impossible for us to form any precise idea of its characteristic powers and functionings. As Sri Aurobindo says “In the gnostic change the evolution crosses a line beyond which there is a supreme and radical reversal of consciousness and the standards and form of mental cognition are no longer sufficient”. (*The Life Divine* p. 1024). Some indirect idea of the supramental nature can, however, be had by contrasting it in very general terms with our own mental nature. This can best be done by quoting Sri Aurobindo's own words: “Mental nature and mental thought are based on a consciousness of the finite; supramental nature is in its very grain a consciousness and power of the Infinite. Supramental nature sees everything from the stand-point of oneness and regards all things, even the greatest multiplicity and diversity, even what are to the mind the strongest contradictions, in the light of that oneness; its will, ideas, feelings, sense are made of the stuff of the oneness, its actions proceed upon that basis. Mental nature on the contrary thinks, sees, wills, feels, senses, with division as a starting point and has only a constructed understanding of unity; even when it experiences oneness, it has to act from the oneness on a basis of limitation and difference. But the supramental, the divine life is a life of essential spontaneous and inherent unity. The mind acts by intellectual rule or device or by reasoned choice of will or by mental impulse or in obedience to life impulse; but supramental nature does not act by mental idea or rule or in obedience to any inferior impulse: each of its steps is dictated by an innate spiritual vision; a comprehensive and exact penetration into the truth of all and the truth of each thing; it acts always according to inherent reality, not by the mental idea, not according to an imposed law of conduct or a constructive thought or perceptive contrivance. Its movement is calm, self-possessed, spontaneous, plastic; it arises naturally and inevitably out of a harmonic identity of the truth which is felt in the very substance of the

WHAT IS SRI AUROBINDO DOING ?

conscious being, a spiritual substance which is universal and therefore intimately one with all that is included in its cognition of existence". (*The Life Divine* p. 1025)

This long quotation from Sri Aurobindo is introduced here in order that it may help us to infer and glimpse, however inadequately and vaguely, the nature of the divine Supermind; for, it is necessary to keep in view the fact that, high and incommunicable though it is to our present mentality, it is not entirely alien to us. The Supermind as the supreme Truth-consciousness and "creatrix of the worlds" is also the creator of our mentality; our own mind is a limited formulation of its power and conceals in its essence the potentiality of the Supermind. Being in essence identical with the Supermind it is capable of rising to and, by a supreme effort of self-transcendence, resolving itself into the supramental Truth-consciousness.

When the Supermind or Gnosis is established on earth it will take up into itself all the earth-nature for transformation into its light and power. Each degree of consciousness that has emerged in evolution before the advent of the Supermind has similarly tried to take up the earth-nature into itself and to transform it entirely into its own characteristic law and power. But, as mentioned earlier, none of these previous powers have been completely successful in their attempt, for none of them had adequate force to annul completely the rule of inconscience over the earth-nature. They were able to exercise a profound influence and to diminish considerably the grip of inconscience and ignorance but they failed to bring about a total and integral conversion and transformation of the earth-consciousness. The basic reason for this failure can be only that while the inconscient is infinite in its dark power the dynamic force possessed by all the mental and spiritual-mental ranges below the Supermind, though luminous, is finite.

In Sri Aurobindo's Supermind alone we find the infinite self-achieving truth-power of the supreme that can completely transform the earth-nature and can integrally divinise the earth-life, for it can entirely annul the rule of inconscience over the earth-consciousness and replace it by the divine rule of the supreme truth. The Truth-power or the Real Idea of the Supermind in its transmuting action upon the earth-nature will not be obstructed and frustrated

by ignorance and inconscience as in the case of lesser mental and spiritual powers, because its action is always automatically self-effective, its will and knowledge are always identical and the result always commensurate. (This does not mean that the Supermind always acts with its absolute power and cannot act otherwise, for that itself would be a limitation by compulsion; it can and does limit its operations but the limits within which it confines its action are self-chosen and not imposed by any alien power).

This sovereign and unveiled intervention of the self-effective supramental Truth-Power will fulfil the secret urge of the evolutionary earth-existence and by decisively joining its depths with the heights of the Spirit without any intervening veil of Ignorance bring about a total divinisation of all its powers and principles. This does not imply that the evolutionary process will cease entirely after the emergence of Supermind; the evolution even after the emergence of the Supermind will continue infinitely in the Infinite but it will change its fundamental character; instead of being an evolution in Ignorance it will turn into an always progressive evolution in Knowledge.

This, then, in briefest outline, is the work Sri Aurobindo is carrying on in his so called 'seclusion' for the last thirty years—the secure establishment of the supramental consciousness on earth, bringing about its integral transformation and divinisation and as a result the creation of a new type of being, the Gnostic Being. In order to avoid our usual miscomprehension in face of such a stupendous proposition it is necessary to make it clear that Sri Aurobindo's work does not merely consist in philosophically establishing the necessity of the future emergence of supramental consciousness in the evolutionary process and in showing it to be the ultimate goal of human existence but in actually, dynamically and concretely trying to bring about that emergence and in taking decisive steps to reach that goal. It is necessary to stress this point here because of the almost universal tendency to consider the spiritual action either unreal or ineffective only because its results are not immediately apparent on the visible surface of life. The stressing of this point becomes all the more necessary in the case of Sri Aurobindo whose whole work is aimed at bringing to bear upon the earthly existence an as yet unknown range of spiritual power—the infinite self-effective Truth-will of the spirit itself—and at putting it to the

WHAT IS SRI AUROBINDO DOING ?

most essential and fruitful use for mankind—raising it to a new level of divine existence by bringing about a definitive change in universal nature and making possible the next tremendous step in the evolutionary process.

In order to avoid another usual misunderstanding about Sri Aurobindo it must also be pointed out that he is not seeking the Supramental Truth-Power to make a superman of himself and possibly of his few disciples, leaving the rest of humanity to itself, afflicted as ever with blind suffering and disintegrating under the extreme strain of dark conflicting forces. Sri Aurobindo is concerned not with his own self or his few disciples but with the entire earth-consciousness. His own achievement, as he wrote to a disciple, will only be a key for the opening of the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness. But this again does not mean that as a result of his own supramentalisation the entire human race will automatically become supramental. Such, in fact, has never been the course of evolution. In evolution, whenever a new level is reached or a new principle emerges, only a minority manages to rise to the new level and succeeds in embodying the new emergent principle, the rest—the vast majority—remain fixed in the grooves of the old order. The emergence of life in matter did not make all inanimate substance alive nor did the emergence of mind into life turn all living creatures into intelligent human beings. Similarly, when the Supermind emerges there is no likelihood of the whole humanity turning *en masse* into gnostic beings. Sri Aurobindo has never proposed such miracles, he has very clearly stated that “there is not the least probability or possibility of the whole human race rising in a block to the supramental level”. (*The Life Divine* p. 837) But what he has been confidently proposing and is trying his utmost to accomplish is to create a secure and sufficient base in terrestrial existence for the Supermind to take its definitive root there so that it becomes a directly operative power in the earth-consciousness and no longer a distant and veiled power, in the same manner as mind has definitely established itself in the earth-consciousness and is a directly operative power. Such secure establishment of the Supermind in the very base of the earth-consciousness will create a general possibility for the realisation of the supramental consciousness by those who are ready or who, by spiritual practice, make themselves ready for it. A clear and definite path will be laid down which all who choose can follow. This means that for no one the supramental achievement will be automatic; his own

earnest effort and co-operation in the process will be essential. The fundamental reason for the necessity is again to be found in the evolutionary process itself. All the steps of evolution till self-conscious man appeared have been taken by evolutionary Nature herself without the conscious co-operation of the evolving constituents. The evolving constituents being themselves either inconscious or sub-conscious were incapable of giving any co-operation and hence evolutionary Nature had to carry on her uphill task all by herself. But once self-consciousness appears on the scene she insists on the conscious co-operation of the species for all further evolution in consciousness. For this reason, there can be for self-conscious human beings no automatic evolution in higher degrees of consciousness; a sincere, sustained and prolonged conscious effort—which means the practice of yoga or sadhana—is essential for such evolution. On account of this necessity the Supermind which is the next destined step in the evolutionary progression will be realised only by those few who earnestly and whole-heartedly aspire for it and by spiritual practice make themselves fit for the reception and retention of its supreme truth-power.

This, however, does not imply that the rest of humanity will not at all be influenced by the appearance of the Supermind on the earth-scene and its realisation by a few. As a matter of fact the consequences of the decisive emergence of the Supermind on earth will be exceedingly helpful to all human activities. In Sri Aurobindo's own encouraging words: "A dominant principle of harmony would impose itself on the life of the Ignorance; the discord, the blind seeking, the clash of struggle, the abnormal vicissitudes of exaggeration and depression and unsteady balance of the unseeing forces at work in their mixture and conflict, would feel the influence and yield place to a more orderly pace and harmonic steps of the development of being, a more revealing arrangement of progressing life and consciousness, a better life-order. A freer play of intuition and sympathy and understanding would enter into human life, a clearer sense of the truth of self and things and a more enlightened dealing with the opportunities and difficulties of existence. Instead of a constant intermixed and confused struggle between the growth of consciousness and the power of the Inconscience, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, the evolution would become a graded progression from lesser light to greater light. In the emergence of gnostic being would be the hope of

a more harmonious evolutionary order in terrestrial Nature". (*The Life Divine* p. 1033).

It thus becomes evident that the work which Sir Aurobindo has been carrying on in his so called 'retirement' for about thirty years is of supreme importance to mankind. He has not been sitting absorbed in the profundities of the silent Self, oblivious of the acute problems of mankind, but, from that necessary base, is single-mindedly concentrating on the task the accomplishment of which alone can deliver humanity from its blind suffering and bring to it lasting peace and happiness. His persistent refusal to come out of his 'seclusion' to help this or that cause or movement or organisation has behind it only this reason — not to waste time in superficial action while a task of immense importance and affecting the fate of the whole humanity was demanding his undivided attention; That work has proved so extremely exacting and strenuous that he had to leave aside all other activity, however important it might have seemed in itself; even the writing of *The Life Divine* and of poetry the like of which has not yet been seen on earth had to be left incomplete and postponed indefinitely.

To remove one more usual misunderstanding about Sri Aurobindo it may be pointed out here that the work he is attempting is not achieved by a miracle or a series of miracles, however miraculous often its results might seem to the mind untrained in spiritual and occult matters. No credit could be given to him for a work, no matter how great, which proceeds automatically by the occurrence of miracles. In reality, the work that he has taken upon himself is done not by miracles, but is carried on in the midst of concrete and actual conditions, laws and processes of nature; it is an immensely difficult, exacting and often extremely dangerous work proceeding on a cosmic scale, a secret universal action directed against grim resistance of the earth-nature and unimaginable opposition from occult diabolic forces and beings that have established a strong grip over the ignorant terrestrial existence. It is a real and concrete work in which, at all stages, the existing conditions are to be accepted and the deep-rooted difficulties are to be honestly faced and patiently removed. The scope and range and the vicissitudes of this work of Sri Aurobindo's are too vast and complex and occult for our narrow and blind surface mentality to grasp. His own reply to a disciple is a warning to those who

are impertinent enough to sit in judgment on his life and work. "No one can write about my life, because it has not been on the surface for man to see." Surely it is not the aim of the present writer to give any adequate idea of Sri Aurobindo's tremendous and unfathomable world-action; the aim has been only to provide a few pointers to the supreme importance and the incalculable significance of that work for the whole mankind and to suggest that, if the considerations put forth here seem plausible, then it would not be proper to accuse Sri Aurobindo of inaction or of ineffective action; on the contrary, he should truly be called the Master Maker of Mankind's Divine Destiny.

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· Sri Aurobindo's Vision of Supermanhood

The goal of integral spirituality, as defined by 'Sri Aurobindo,—the supreme objective of all-embracing spiritual striving,—is “the flowing of the Divine in collective Humanity”; supermanhood is the concrete shape which this flowering is to assume. Man has been up till now the glory of Nature's evolutionary endeavour; the next forward step in her course, the most decisive transition in her creative advance, is the evolution of Man into the Divine Man. 'Superman' is but another name for the Divine Man. Just as the animal is the living laboratory in which Nature has worked out Man, so also Man himself is a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she is striving to work out the Divine Man or Superman. (*The Life Divine Vol. I p. 6*) Mind is a lower form of manifestation, or an inferior mode of operation, of the vast unmediated Truth-Consciousness or the dynamic vision of Truth which has been called the Supermind. Supermanhood implies the descent of the Supermind in man, its overt operation in all the parts of his existence, and its success in transforming him thoroughly into an image of the Divine. The Superman is thus Man transfigured in all the members of his being by the sovereign dynamism of the Spirit. In other words, the Superman is Man supramentalised even down to the cells of his body and the corpuscles of his blood. The vision of supermanhood sums up and brings to a focus the loftiest ideals which have inspired mankind throughout the ages. Moreover, it is, with Sri Aurobindo, a vision whose inherent dynamism brings the ideal of Divine Life on earth within a measurable distance of human achievement.

The ideal of the Superman avoids the extremes of a world-renouncing flight into the Alone on the one hand, and a God-denouncing enlargement of the Ego on the other. Having struck a middle course between ascetic self-mortification and materialistic self-aggrandisement, it directs man's attention to the goal of self-fulfilment in divine manifestation. I speak of self-fulfilment in divine manifestation, and not simply, and rather vaguely, of

self-fulfilment in God, because that strikes the most distinctive note in the spiritual sadhana of Sri Aurobindo. To be a Superman is not simply to rise above the binding limitations of humanity and to seek self-realisation in God. It is immensely more than that. It is to co-operate consciously with the Divine in His manifestation in material conditions, to assist Him in His self-revelation in collective humanity through an integral transformation of our instrumental nature. The ideal of the Superman derives from a certain vision and depends for realisation on a certain power: the vision is the integral realisation of God not only as a transcendent Perfection but also as an immanent principle of the cosmic process, bent upon self-manifestation in ever novel and infinitely diverse forms; and the power, which would necessarily flow from such integral realisation, may be said to be one's dynamic self-identification with the Divine Will in man.

That man is not the last word of evolution is almost a commonplace today. It has been possible for man to be conscious of his distressing limitations only because there is something in him which already transcends these limitations. This something, which may be termed the divine spark, ever leads him on towards self-transcending. Now, there are different stages in man's self-transcendence, and different forms of self-realisation through self-transcendence, corresponding to which there are different ideals of the super-man or the more-than-human. A brief survey of these different ideals will help us in obtaining a clear and distinct idea of the Superman as conceived by Sri Aurobindo.

We may at the very outset set on one side the view of those who would restrict the ideal of supermanhood to a privileged few or to some exceptionally gifted persons who alone are supposed to be capable of growing into enormous proportions and that at the cost of overwhelming multitudes of people. It is a gross misuse of the gospel of supermanhood to turn it into an arrogant claim for a limited class or a few isolated individuals. Rightly conceived, the gospel furnishes a generous ideal for the progressive human race and points to the bright future of evolving mankind. It is an ideal of collective transformation or racial evolution and not of individual over-growth. It is as such a collective ideal that the gospel of supermanhood carries the solution of the problems of human existence and the maladies of human living. Bernard Shaw

utters a significant truth when he says that what is essentially needed to-day to save mankind from recurrent catastrophes is a Democracy of Supermen. (*Man and Superman* p. 171). The overthrow of the king or the aristocrat has in his view made this need imperative.

Nietzsche developed his ideal of the Superman in direct opposition to the Christian conception of the crucified God. The Superman as conceived by him is an embodiment of absolute power. Love that surrenders is morbid sentimentalism; submission to torture is a sign of weakness and an acceptance of defeat. The Superman is one who towers far above the teeming millions and has the power to impose his will upon his contemporaries. Whatever is opposed to him must either be crushed out of existence or conquered into subservience, so that his own image may stand out stamped on all things and dominating all his environment. The God of Christianity is a loving and persuasive agency, while Nietzsche's Superman is an over-ruling and all-dominating Power. The Divine Lover gladly accepts suffering and rises triumphant over it, while the Superman fiercely and arrogantly repels all suffering and misery and is a complete stranger to the ideal of sorrow and service as liberating forces.

Nietzsche's Superman is, in the second place, above or rather against moral distinctions. For achieving his own purpose he would not feel the slightest hesitation in casting to the four winds all moral considerations. Moral notions are for him a positive hindrance, a meaningless obstacle on the way. It is in the good and the just that, according to Nietzsche, lies the greatest danger to the whole human future. "Whatever the wicked may do, the harm of the good is the harmfulest harm! Themselves unable to create any new value, they crucify him who writeth new values on new tables; they sacrifice into themselves the future they crucify the whole human future!" (*Thus spake Zarathustra* p. 259) The Will to Power is the essence of Life; the Will to Truth is nothing but the will for the thinkableness of all being and the will to existence or the will to life is untrue, because much is reckoned higher than life itself by the living one. Even the formulas of good and evil are only a device for exercising power. But a new surpassing is sure to take place, and a stranger power is sure to emerge out of these formulas and lower

values. The gospel of Supermankind represents this new surpassing and the emergence of this stranger power.

In developing his gospel of Supermankind, Nietzsche lays his finger upon an important aspect of Reality, and provides a corrective to the exclusive emphasis in Christianity on love. True it is that God is Love, and that Delight which is the essence of Love is the deepest core of the Divine. But that does not necessitate the exclusion of Power from the Divine nature. Power is an essential factor in the self-manifestation of the Spirit in Matter. As infinite existence and consciousness, the Supreme Spirit or God is assuredly absolute Power and the exercise of Power is unavoidable for the fulfilment of His playful purpose of self-manifestation in the direct contraries of His nature. Infinite consciousness seeks self-manifestation on the basis of the Inconscience, and absolute knowledge seeks self-revelation in the domain of Ignorance. Power is greatly needed to subdue the forces of Darkness and Evil, which are impervious to gentle persuasion, so that the wished-for divine transformation of the lower may be effected. Unity and Immortality seek manifestation in the region of plurality and perishing diversity; Power is imperatively needed to tune up the jarring notes of discord and violent antagonism into the elements of Divine Symphony. God is indeed the harmonious unity of Power, Knowledge and Love, the unity of pure existence, pure consciousness and pure bliss (Sachchidanada). The Superman who is intended to be a fuller manifestation of the Divine on the stage of the evolving universe must harmoniously combine within himself all the divine elements. Viewed from the other side, Supermankind must be "a certain divine and harmonious absolute of all that is essential in man", who is made in God's image. "To take all that is essential in the human being and uplift it to its most absolute term so that it may become an element of light, joy, power for oneself and others, this is divinity. This, too, should be the drift of supermankind". (*Sri Aurobindo's The Superman* p. 6) Christianity stresses overmuch the aspect of Love in the Divine Reality. In correcting this error of over-emphasis, Nietzsche falls into the opposite mistake of exaggerating Power into the one supreme Fact, and sets himself in senseless opposition to the notion of God as Love. Intoxicated by Power, he turns a blind eye to the sublime significance of suffering, he fails to grasp the truth of vicarious atonement and misses the secret of self-fulfilment

through self-sacrifice. The Christian emphasis on Love, the Nietzschean emphasis on Power, and the Greek emphasis on Knowledge represent complementary fragments of truth. It is through their synthesis that we may hope to obtain the full-orbed vision of supermanhood. Firmly united to the Fount of ineffable joy and infinite knowledge, the Superman would be all love to the striving soul and ruthless power to the forces of darkness and evil.

Even Power, as conceived by Nietzsche, cannot be accepted without essential modification. Conceived as it is in divorce from Knowledge and Love, it sinks into the purely destructive and dominating force of the Asura. Nietzsche's Superman is indeed a deification of the demon in man; he is, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, "the son of division and the strong flowering of the Ego". He seeks unity by devouring, not by harmonising. His one overmastering impulse is to see the rest of mankind dwarfed by his side so that he may feel immeasurable, and to dominate his whole environment with an iron hand, so that no challenge may shake his sense of immensity. The Superman or the Divine Man, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, is on the contrary, seated in the true sense of infinity which no amount of division or disagreement can abrogate. And his infinity emerges from the death of his ego; the glory of his universal conquest springs from the crucifixion of his exclusive particularity. The Superman will have the infinite power of God at his disposal, but he would be loth to make any personal use thereof. He would wield his power not for egoistic self-satisfaction, not for any violent domination, but always in implicit obedience to the Divine Will for the fulfilment of the divine purpose in the world. As a playmate of the Divine, the Superman would unreservedly offer his body, his life and his mind as plastic instruments in the hands of the Divine Mother (i. e., the superconscient creative Power of God) so that life on earth may be turned into a sacred poem of divine ecstasy.

Nietzsche gives evidence of a remarkable depth of insight when he boldly announces the limited scope of moral distinctions. He places his Superman beyond good and evil. He rightly perceives that ethical distinctions, when rigidly adhered to, tend to obstruct the emergence of higher values, and thus serve as a check upon the further progress of the universe. But that does not surely entitle the Superman to indulge in actions which will be detrimental to the best collective interests of man. It is in the interests of the

deepest truth of human nature that a transcending of abstract ethical principles becomes necessary. Social or conventional morality has an importance in maintaining the *status quo* in ensuring the stability of social organisation, and in conserving what has already been achieved in the course of evolution. But to overstress conventional morality is to embrace stagnation; to cry halt to the march of evolution. Even the most exalted moral principles are sure to hamper, if they are deified and enthroned as the ultimate truth. The Spirit is far deeper and richer than any abstract principle or collection of rules, however exalted. Though Nietzsche is right in perceiving the limited scope of moral values, he goes wrong in considering moral values a form of expression of the Will to Power. The fundamental thing is the evolution of the soul or the manifestation of the Spirit in matter. And Spirit is as much joy and love, knowledge and beauty as it is power. Moral values have, without doubt, an immense significance in the unfoldment of the soul; they facilitate evolution up to a very lofty height. But carried beyond the highest point of mental development, they would obstruct and hinder. They are after all relative to a certain stage of evolution; prior to that stage, we have the infra-ethical world of animals, and beyond that stage, we have the supra-ethical world of those who live the life of the Spirit.

Now, precisely in what sense are we to understand the supra-ethical mode of action? That the supra-moral point of view is the radical opposite of the infra-moral must, in the first instance, be clearly grasped. At the infra-moral level, there is the rigid determinism of instinct; the will has not yet come to its own and consequently the moral distinctions of right and wrong lack their necessary basis. At the human level, for the first time, the moral distinctions emerge with the growth of autonomous will, and the moral distinctions derive their supreme validity from the fact that the human will is supposed to have a separate life of its own. With greater spiritual progress and deeper self-realisation, it is made increasingly clear that the individual is essentially a centre of action of the supreme Reality, and that the largest freedom and the highest fulfilment of the individual's will lies in its dynamic self-identification with the all-sustaining will of the Supreme. As a consequence, morality is not negated, but is transformed beyond itself into spirituality! The truth behind moral distinctions is not denied, but is taken up and enriched in the supra-moral mode of activity. It is a commonplace of

philosophic criticism that there is a fundamental self-discrepancy in the moral point of view. Morality aims at removing the conflict between impulse and law, the discord between passion and reason, but yet it is on this very conflict and this discord that morality depends. The removal of this paradox secures the self-fulfilment of the moral urge beyond the sphere of morality; and the Superman, rightly conceived, belongs to that superior stage of progress. It is not in conformity to an abstract principle which dictates his actions, but complete identification with the life of the Spirit who is above all principles. The Superman would act, not in accordance with any fixed rule, but out of the free spontaneity of his nature which is purged of all dross and impurity. Actions beneficial to man would indeed flow from his very nature which has grown into the likeness of God. The Superman is supra-ethical, not in the sense that he can indulge with impunity in immoral actions, but in the sense that he is by nature incapable of performing immoral actions or actions which are hurtful to the highest interests of society. Immorality would be an unthinkable violation of his nature, a profanation of the sanctuary of his soul.

The Superman would be supra-ethical in a deeper sense still. Conventional morality is conducive to the interests of the established order of society. Higher morality calls up before one the vistas of further progress, and insists on creating higher values. In breaking the bounds of conventional morality, a man is often prompted by a genuine love of humanity. The Superman has surely a genuine love of humanity, but this love of humanity is not with him the ultimate spring of action. Seated in the vast Truth-Consciousness, the Superman would look upon humanity not as a self-contained fact, nor as an end unto itself, but as a medium of self-manifestation of God on earth. So it is the purpose of God in and through humanity which will be the final determinate of all the actions of the Superman. Active love of God or dynamic self-identification with the Divine will is with the Superman the most basic thing; love of humanity is a necessary consequence thereof. In many cases, we find that what masquerades as love of humanity is only a form of collective egoism, is indeed the utmost extension and objectification of one's own ego. In many cases, the philanthropist only loves the enlarged image of his own Ego reflected in the total collectivity of men, oblivious or ignorant of the precise status and function of Man in the scheme of reality and of the deeper purpose

which creatively determines the march of human evolution. He is incapable of rising above the region of ignorance and egotism, of perceiving the supreme Truth which lends whatever value and significance we attach to the affairs of men, and accordingly, of guiding evolving humanity to its predestined end. The Superman is one whose luminous vision of the Truth raises him above the intellectual formulas of humanitarianism and utilitarianism, and who has the power of directing the course of human affairs to a unique type of divine flowering; he leads Man on to his deepest self-fulfilment through a strange surpassing and a self-transcending. For Sri Aurobindo, man is not the truth above everything else, but is, without doubt, the fittest medium of self-manifestation of God upon Earth. There is some truth in the saying that man is made in the image of God, but, man is such an image only *in potentia*; man, as he is actually known to be, is only an imperfect image, an unrecognisably faint imitation of the Godhead. The Superman is Man turned into a perfect image of the Divine, thoroughly transfigured in every member of his being.

Bernard Shaw, in his *Man and Superman* points to the need of collective evolution of Man into Superman, if any genuine progress is to be made beyond what has already been achieved. "The overthrow of the aristocrat", says he, "has created the necessity of the Superman". What we require most to-day is a "democracy of Supermen" if we wish to eliminate the possibility of recurrent catastrophes. "We must eliminate the yahoo, or his vote will wreck the Commonwealth". Shaw rightly perceives that man, as he is, never will nor can add a cubit to his stature by any of his quackeries, political, scientific, educational, religious or artistic. The path of progress lies through a radical change of human nature. But precisely what sort of change? and what would be the method of effecting it? On both these essential points there is a wide divergence of opinion separating Sri Aurobindo from Shaw. In envisaging the Superman, Shaw insists upon avoiding the football club folly of counting on superior mind as a product of superior body and the Sunday school folly of conceiving him as the dupe of our ethical classifications of virtues and vices, in short, of conventional morality. The Superman is, in his view, neither an athlete nor a "good" man. So far so good, but, is that all that supermanhood

Shaw and
Sri Aurobindo

requires ? Mr. Shaw proceeds to cite as instances of supermanhood the names of Cromwell, Napoleon, Caesar, Shakespeare, Shelley, Goethe and Luther. From the point of view of Sri Aurobindo, the above mentioned persons may quite appropriately be characterised as great men or heroic men rather than as Supermen. A full grasp of the distinction between great man and Superman is indeed vital to a proper appreciation of the message of Sri Aurobindo. A great man is one who over-tops others by virtue of an extraordinary development of some human qualities, while a Superman is one who succeeds in attaining the supra-human level, having overpassed the utmost limits of mental development. A great man may be said to tower high above the common run by virtue of his access to some superior gradation of Mind above the ordinary mental. A rare gift of power or a rare flash of insight descending from what Sri Aurobindo calls Higher Mind, Illumined Mind or Overmind is brought into play in his nature, and makes him a towering and commanding personality. Even if he lived altogether in the Overmind consciousness he would not be the complete superman. The Superman is one whose centre of gravity is shifted from the domain of Ignorance to the domain of Truth, from the sphere that comprises Mind and all its superior gradations to the sphere that is illumined by the Supermind which is a pure principle of integral Truth-vision and sovereign Truth-effectuation. While great men are the noblest fruits of the mental principle, the Superman would be the superb flowering of the Supermind. Since the Supermind is as radically different from the Mind as the self-conscious Mind is different from the subconscious vital urge, the Superman differs from the great man as profoundly as a normal human being differs from the mightiest or the most intelligent animal.

There is another important difference between Shaw and Sri Aurobindo, and that is concerning the method of bringing about the evolution of Man into Superman. Bernard Shaw is emphatic in his belief that the institutions of marriage and private property are great obstacles to the advent of the Superman. Marriage, looked upon as an indispensable condition of mating, is, in his opinion, no less an obstruction than capitalism or the concentration of wealth in the hands of a privileged few. He, therefore, lays great emphasis on the socialisation of the selective breeding of man, or, in other words, of human evolution. If the Superman is to come, we must, in a large measure, trust to the guidance of fancy (*alias* Voice of Nature), both in the breeders and

the parents, for that superiority in the unconscious self which will be the true characteristic of the Superman. Now, as a socialist, Shaw is prompted by an over-confidence in the omnipotence of the objective circumstances of human living in effectuating the desired change of man's internal nature. And, as regards Eugenics, his recommendation amounts to a call to co-operation with unconscious Nature or the Life Force. It may be readily admitted that there is some truth in what he urges as his fundamental contention. Far-reaching changes in our social structure would be immensely useful for the fuller self-realisation of the Life Force that works in man. But even such changes, whether they take the form of socialisation of the means of production or of socialisation of selective breeding, are, in the last resort, in the nature of human quackeries as political, scientific, educational, religious or artistic reforms appear to him to be. The outward shape of society is more determined by man's internal nature than is a determinant thereof. So the right course is to proceed from within outwards, and not to begin at the wrong end. What is primarily and most essentially needed is a total conversion of man's being and consciousness, a root and branch transformation of his nature. This can be accomplished only by bringing into overt operation a superior power of consciousness, by invoking that dynamic principle of Truth-consciousness of which mind is only a subordinate instrumentation, and by making that principle a permanent ingredient here below as the mind now is. What, then, is needed, is not blind co-operation with the Life Force, but rather the open-eyed voluntary co-operation, through integral surrender, with the superconscient creative Power of which the Life Force is an expression on a much lower plane. The evolution of Man into Superman would require the liberation of Nature herself into Supernature through the transforming activity of the Supermind.

The idea of Superman, in some form or other—the idea of a supra-human future of the history of human progress—is a necessary implication of the theory of evolution properly understood. Belief in humanity as the last word of the creative advance of Nature violently militates against the very spirit of evolution. Prof. Alexander, who is one of the high priests of modern evolutionism, has, in his great work *Space, Time and Deity*, given a fascinating account of the future of mankind. Both philosophic contemplation and religious aspiration point, so he contends, to something far transcending the limits of man and

profoundly differing from his distinctive empirical quality. The total Space-Time, which is the matrix of all existence and the nurse of all becoming, is, from the beginning, impregnated with a creative *nisus* towards the production of higher and higher unique and emergent qualities. The unique and superior quality which appears on the horizon of man is the quality of "deity" whose definite shape and manner of embodiment are more than we can know at this stage. But the basic fact which can hardly be ignored is that the entire world of Space-Time is constantly striving forward towards the production of the novel quality of deity. Men, who are inevitably caught in the whirlpool of this universal striving, respond in the form of religious aspiration. When the co-operation of Man and Nature in their creative endeavours will succeed, the result will be the appearance of deity on the scene of empirical reality, and the consequent emergence of a highly superior race of creatures whom Alexander calls finite gods or angels, and who may most aptly be designated superman. The creative *nisus* in Space-Time will then project in front of the race of angels another higher empirical quality, the quality which will function as deity in relation to angels. Actualisation has the effect of robbing deity of its glamour by turning it into a mere fact; it de-divinises the Divine. Deity, as Prof. Alexander conceives it, is a *nisus* or an ideal possibility, and never an actual accomplishment. (*Space, Time and Deity, Vol II, p. 364.*)

The points which are common to Prof. Alexander's theory of angelic being and Sri Aurobindo's vision of Supermanhood are the following. Both are agreed that man is not the last word of the evolutionary endeavour of Nature. Man is sure to evolve into Superman or a higher order of being, just as the animal evolved into man, or as the plant once evolved into the animal. The necessity for this evolution is rooted in the very nature of things. For Prof. Alexander, this necessity arises from the fact that Time is an essential factor in the fundamental make-up of the universe, and for Sri Aurobindo, this necessity derives from the Divine will to self-manifestation in matter. Secondly, there is this further point of agreement between the philosopher and the seer that, according to both, the distinctive characteristic of the Superman would as profoundly and as radically differ from the reason of man as the latter differs from the sense-bound consciousness of the animal. The Superman would not be simply a great man or a human hero, one, that

is to say, who overtops other members of his species in the force of human qualities; he would rather be the embodiment of unique emergent quality. Now, the general trend of Alexander's philosophic thinking points to 'the view that angels would form as separate a species or order of beings from man as man is separate from the animal, or the animal from the plant. It is true that the substructure of the human mind is provided by a certain degree of complexity of the vital forces, but these forces are not such as are found operative in the animal or plant. Separate configurations of space-time developing a specific constellation of vital and neural functions can alone serve as vehicles of human mentality. Similarly, the emergence of angels or supermen would be the emergence of a higher species beyond and beside the human. Deity would require for its manifestation a certain degree of complexity and refinement of mentality, but not necessarily of the mentality already embodied in men. The substructure of emergent quality of the deity must, without doubt, be provided by a specific constellation of mental functions, but, if we are to follow the lines of experience, that specific constellation must be supposed to be the development of new complexes of space-time.

But the view-point of Sri Aurobindo embodies a significant difference in this matter. At the pre-human or infra-human stages of evolution it is true, so contends Sri Aurobindo, that Nature had to go beyond the existing order to bring to birth the higher order. The infra-human levels of creation were shut out from, and had no conscious intimation of, the secret purpose of Nature. Man, on the contrary, is a self-conscious being, and is gifted with the power of freely controlling his actions in accordance with his loftiest ideals. He is capable of obtaining a glimpse of the drift of evolution and the evolutionary urge is expressed within him in the shape of ideals and aspirations. So, at the human stage it seems quite possible that man should not simply lead on to the evolution of the Superman, but will himself evolve into the Superman through an integral transformation of his being. Man seems to have the power not only, by his cultural and spiritual pursuits, to prepare the ground for the advent of the Superman, but to rise himself to the stature of supermanhood by securing a definite lift of the centre of his consciousness. Of course, if man chooses to cling to his own level and to eschew the path of self-transcendence, then Nature will have to by-pass him, and create Supermen as an order of beings separate from the entire human race. But Sri Aurobindo is emphatic in his

belief that the birth of the Divine in man is the supreme consummation towards which the march of human civilisation has been proceeding through the ages. Man has the power within him to rise above the limitations of his ego-centric nature, and to enter into conscious co-operation with the Divine Power which secretly guides the process of evolution. As a consequence, man can himself be the vehicle for the full flowering of the Divine.

It will be further noted that in Prof. Alexander's view, the series of empirical qualities such as vitality, mentality, spirituality etc. are a discontinuous series of unique and emergent qualities, emerging one knows not whence and appearing one knows not how. The coming into being of the angel will mean the birth of another separate species due to the emergence of another unique quality essentially discontinuous with the rest. But, for Sri Aurobindo, Life, Mind, Supermind are different powers of consciousness of the same supreme Spirit or Sachchidananda. As evolution advances higher and higher powers of consciousness are brought into manifestation. The advent of supermen and gnostic beings would, therefore, be the crowning consummation of the increasing process of self-manifestation of the Spirit in matter. Prof. Alexander seems to be under the influence of a vague idea of endlessness. When, on his view, the angel would be created, the deity would be shifted farther ahead, and would assume the form of a higher empirical quality looming large before him. There is no definite end or goal to the course of evolution. Such a view seems to be inspired by a wrong idea of infinity. True infinity does not consist in an indefinite prolongation of some process. A significant process of evolution must be in the nature of an increasing approximation to some definite goal or towards some complete fulfilment. That does not surely mean the coming to a dead stop of all time-processes. The true Infinite is that which has an infinite richness of content. The delight of becoming of ultimate Reality must, therefore, take the form of an unceasing effort to manifest the Infinite in infinite ways in infinitely diverse orders of evolution. The order of evolution to which we belong tends towards the birth of supermen and gnostic beings, that is to say, towards the completest manifestation of the Spirit in matter. There are, and there will be, other orders of evolution having for their goals different modes of self-fulfilment of the Divine.

Having discussed some western views of the future of evolving man, we may now turn to the great eastern ideal of the supra-human self-fulfilment of man in spiritual liberation. It will be instructive to institute a comparison between the ideal of the Superman and the traditional views of the liberated soul as current in ancient India. Our life in this world is, as the Indian sage would put it, a life of bondage, springing from, and encompassed on all sides by, Ignorance, i. e., non-apprehension of the nature of ultimate Reality. Liberation consists in breaking the bonds of Ignorance, and in wrenching one-self entirely free from the fetters of egoism and individuality which are the products of Ignorance. It means the passage of the soul from the sphere of death, desire and duality to the immortal existence of ineffable joy and infinite consciousness. Now, some believe, that on the attainment of liberation, which comes after dissociation from the physical frame, the soul need have no truck with the world of appearance, because the world of appearance is either an illusory show, or a sphere of inexorable Necessity, or a product of some blind unconscious principle, and is as such incapable of being redeemed. The one aim of the liberated soul is to be permanently united with the supreme Reality, whether this union takes the form of complete absorption or eternal communion, whether it is presented as Nirvana, or Brahma-laya, or Iswarasamipya. There are others who hold that, though liberation is attained on the break-up of the body, still the liberated soul, having stopped short of the final state of absorption or spiritual quiescence, may continue to work from superior planes, by way of assisting the struggling souls, out of the abundance of his love for suffering humanity. The Bodhisattva takes the vow of not accepting salvation until every creature on earth has been saved. Then again there is the view that complete spiritual freedom can be attained even here and now in this very life, without the body having to break up as an essential pre-condition. This is the ideal of the Jivanmukta which forms the most inspiring message of the Vedanta. The Jivanmukta is, as it were, a citizen of two worlds. As an embodied living being he belongs to the phenomenal world of appearance, and has all the natural means of contact with it. As a liberated being, he belongs to the transcendental world of reality; he is lifted into the freedom of the Spirit and is united with the Self which is pure infinite

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF SUPERMANHOOD

consciousness. The Jivanmukta, so conceived, seems to bear the closest resemblance to the Superman in so far as he seems to represent the consummation of evolving human nature attained under the conditions of this very life. It is, therefore, necessary to consider if this resemblance amounts to an identity.

It may be said at once that a Superman must certainly be a Jivanmukta or an embodied liberated soul, but then all Jivanmuktas are not Supermen. Supermanhood is a far richer concept and a greater achievement than Jivanmukti. There have indeed been numerous instances of Jivanmukti in the past, but Supermanhood is yet to blossom forth in the course of further evolution. A Jivanmukta is one who succeeds in his life-time in exceeding the trammels of the physical, the vital and the mental, and in attaining the transcendental consciousness (*paramarthic* or *turiya chetana*). But having attained the transcendental consciousness, he makes no further attempt to assist the descent of the light and power of the supreme consciousness into the flux of evolution. Emancipated from the drive of desire, he stands outside the urge of evolution itself. Freed from the shackles of the body, he stops short of the supreme effort to turn the body into a perfect image of the Divine or into a medium of the Spirit's manifestation in Matter. Enraptured by the ascending movement of the soul towards God, he fails to notice the descending movement of God towards self-objectification, and, as a consequence, misses the significance of the cosmic process.

The Superman, on the contrary, has for his distinguishing mark a thorough divine transformation of all the parts of his embodied existence including even the grossest physical. He has grasped the Reality not only in its full height, but also in its full extent and comprehensiveness. He has not only glimpsed the Spirit in its native splendours; he has also perceived the meaning of the Spirit in Matter. His whole energy is consequently directed to correlating the upward movement of human aspiration with the downward movement of Divine self-manifestation. For him, emancipation from the drive of desire does not mean a smothering of the urge of evolution; this emancipation rather makes him eminently fitted to bring the evolutionary urge to its complete fruition. The Superman feels himself one with the creative impetus, though he is also securely seated in the vast tranquillity of the Spirit. Gathered into the bosom of the Silence, he is still a channel through which flows

unceasingly and irresistibly a dynamic energy, the self-realising energy of the creative flow. But how is that possible? How can the Silence and the Activity be reconciled in one person? How can a career of unceasing activity be organically connected with the attainment of the highest knowledge? This has been a puzzle, a baffling paradox, to many.

In Bergson's opinion, the highest form of mysticism lies in dynamic self-identification with the creative impetus, and its essence is love, action, creation. But, being enamoured of the dynamic aspect, Bergson turns a blind eye to another aspect of reality, the aspect of Silence, the quiescence of timeless perfection. Enthusiasm for action and creation withdraws his mind from the calm of self-possession, and he considers the two, creation and quiescence, incompatible. There are others, on the contrary, who hold that the highest form of spirituality consists in an unhindered contemplation of a static world of values, which are elements of enduring permanence and perfection such as Truth, Beauty, Goodness etc., and of the supreme unifying principle which underlies them. But such a contemplation of the realm of perfection is supposed to have a paralysing influence on our life. "To drink deep of the mystic's cup is to paralyse the energies of life." This conflict between action and contemplation is felt even more intensely by the sages of the East.

The Sankhya, the Vedanta, and Buddhism are all agreed that the springs of all our actions are laid deep in Ignorance. For the Sankhya, this Ignorance assumes the form of non-discrimination between Spirit and Nature, and a consequent self-identification of the pure actionless eternally perfect Spirit with unconscious active Nature. For the Vedanta, this Ignorance is the non-apprehension of the Self which is identical with the supreme Brahman, the Brahman which signifies the unity of pure existence, pure consciousness, and pure bliss. And according to the Buddhist, the Ignorance, which is the source of all mischief, is the failure to perceive the impermanence of the world and the essential painfulness of our life in this world. Thus Ignorance is, as is admitted by all, the root-cause of all suffering and bondage. Action springs from desire, and desire springs from Ignorance, Spiritual freedom then means, on the one hand, an escape from Ignorance to Knowledge, and on the other, a rising above the world of actions and reactions into the domain of unruffled calm and serene tranquillity. But what about Jivanmukta?

Is he not spiritually liberated, and at the same time a dynamic personality who unceasingly works for the welfare of mankind?

The ideal of Jivanmukti has been a hard nut to crack for the adherents of the doctrine which posits Ignorance as the mainspring of all actions. The body is, according to Mayavada, a product of Ignorance, and all actions performed by the body must be traced to an ignorant identification of the Self with the body which is an illusory super-imposition upon it. The attainment of liberation is simultaneous with, or may be said to be the positive side of, the dissipation of Ignorance, and the dissipation of Ignorance must entail the instant destruction of the body. Cessation of all action due to the body is, therefore, a necessary implication of the attainment of complete liberation. Pure knowledge is incompatible with active embodied existence. Various attempts have been made to reconcile the two, and to justify the condition of Jivanmukti. Some say that the Jivanmukta is one in whom Ignorance has no doubt been destroyed, but still its after-effect (*sanskara*) lingers on for some time in the form of the body and the world of appearance (*prapancha*). Is it not a fact that the smell of garlic persists even after the pot where it was kept has been washed and cleaned? Is it not a fact that a wheel kept moving by a driving force continues to move for some time, by virtue of the momentum it has acquired, even after the force is withdrawn? Similar is the case with regard to the actions performed by the body of the Jivanmukta. The momentum in his case is *prarabdha karma* or that portion of his past karma which has already begun to bear fruit in this life. Now, the obvious criticism which suggests itself as against the above view is that the notice of the after-effect of Ignorance betrays confusion of thought, and is based upon wrong analogies. The after-effect of Ignorance is itself a form of Ignorance. The effect is indeed a form of continuation of the cause, or, in other words, the cause may be said to have a fresh lease of life, albeit in a new garb, in the effect. So long, therefore, as *prarabdha karma*, the body and its actions continue, Ignorance cannot be said to be totally destroyed. What would correspond to the destruction of Ignorance in the analogy of the moving wheel is not simply the withdrawal of the driving force from the wheel, but also the destruction of the wheel itself. There is indeed an initial error in describing Ignorance as the cause, and the body and the universe continuous with the body as its effects. The category of cause and effect is entirely an offshoot of Ignorance,

so that Ignorance must be above its range of application. It is so long as we are enveloped by Ignorance that we try to understand things in terms of cause and effect. Immediately the veil of Ignorance is removed, the entire cause-effect series sustained by Ignorance is bound to collapse. So, one can not speak in terms of cause and effect after the real destruction of Ignorance.

Another explanation of Jivanmukti is that what persists after the dissipation of Ignorance or *Avidya* is not an after-effect (*samskara*), but rather an aspect of it. *Avidya* is supposed to have a duality of aspects, a veiling aspect (*avarana*) and a projecting aspect (*viksepa*). Even after the veiling aspect is destroyed on the attainment of knowledge, the projecting aspect may persist for some time. It is this persistence of the projecting aspect which constitutes what is called *avidyalesa*. But a little reflection will be enough to expose the untenability of this device. As "aspects" in the strict sense of the term, the veiling and the projecting must be inseparable functions of *avidya*, so that one cannot persist even for a moment after the cessation of the other. It is on the basis of veiling, that the projection or super-imposition is possible. The appearance of the snake is necessarily dependent upon the veiling of the nature of the rope on which it appears. If it be said that the two functions are not strictly inseparable, so that one can persist without the other, then the doctrine of indivisibility of *Avidya* falls to the ground. What may be said to persist is not really an aspect, but a portion (*avayava*) of Ignorance. But if a portion of Ignorance persists in the case of the Jivanmukta, he cannot be said to be completely liberated (*mukta*). The conception of the body of the Jivanmukta as an *akara* (form) of Ignorance which persists after the destruction of the *akarin* (Ignorance), like the universal (*jati*) persisting after the destruction of the individual, or, as Ignorance rendered thoroughly ineffectual or inoperative like a burnt cloth, would land us in precisely the same difficulties as mentioned above.

An escape from the above difficulties is sought in an emphatic repudiation of the persistence of any residual Ignorance (*avidyalesa*) in the Jivanmukta. The Jivanmukta is one who is completely emancipated from the bonds of Ignorance, and is installed in what may be called the transcendental consciousness. His body may continue to function, not because any residuum

of Ignorance lingers on in him, but because its maintenance is transferred entirely to the *Maya Upadhi* or the universal consciousness of God, who sustains the whole universe. The *Maya Upadhi* supports the body of the Jivanmukta, and allows it to function, so long as he is required by the cosmic purposes. The centre of individual consciousness being dissolved, the Jivanmukta's body is continued as part of the *Maya Upadhi* of Iswara. "The Jivanmukta only identifies himself, by means of a make-believe (*aharya adhyasa*), with the body retained for cosmic purposes by God and is seen to perform actions," (*The Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana*, Dr. N. K. Brahma p. 195,). But if Ignorance is completely dissipated, why is it that the body and the universe still appear to the consciousness of the Jivanmukta? Even a make-believe identification with the body presupposes the appearance of the body, and an active life presupposes the apparent reality of a field of action. It is suggested by way of meeting this objection, that Knowledge and Ignorance are not in fact incompatibles. Far from there being any essential incompatibility between the two, Knowledge, rather sustains Ignorance. Ignorance as belonging to a different order of reality, and as essentially *anirvacaniya* or *mithya* cannot be the contradictory of Knowledge. What is destructive of Ignorance is not the *paramarthic jnana* (transcendental consciousness) which in fact reveals it, but only the modalised consciousness of Brahman (*vrittijnana*), just as grass is burnt not by the rays of the sun as such which, in fact, illumine it, but by the same rays when they are focussed in the gem of *Suryakanta*.

The above view aims at a very important truth, though the form in which it is presented is unacceptable. The basic assumptions which constitute its background are in conflict with the truth which it seeks to express. When a man becomes Jivanmukta on attaining the *turiya chetana* (transcendental consciousness), he perceives that the world including his body is unreal. But why should the unreal still appear to the eye of knowledge? The appearance of the unreal, unless, of course, it is a mere non-entity, can be explained only with reference to some defect in the percipient to which it appears. Our perception of the fire-circle (*alata-chakra*) even when we are aware of its unreality, is due to some defect or limitation of our vision. Secondly, if the world is 'something' or has the appearance of being even from the standpoint of absolute truth, then it becomes difficult to prevent the unqualified monism

of the Advaita from breaking up into an unmitigated dualism. It is contended that Knowledge and Ignorance, Brahman and Jagat, being different orders of reality, one being the supreme truth, and the other *anirvacaniya* or *mīṭhya*, are not contradictory. But even if not contradictory, they are admittedly different, and the gap between them ever remains unbridgeable. There is also the difficulty concerning the source of the world of appearance, if it has some sort of being, even from the standpoint of supreme knowledge. If the world has not the least significance, and no form of being whatsoever, in that case the Jivanmukti becomes a self-contradictory ideal. Liberation would mean complete absorption in, or realisation of absolute non-difference from, one undifferentiated consciousness (Brahman). Even the perception of a world of appearance would become unreal for the truly liberated soul. Why and for whom has then the liberated soul to work? How will he work, and where?

The truth is that Mayavada mistakes derivative reality for unreality, and misconstrues unity as featureless identity. Undifferentiated consciousness is not to be equated with ultimate reality; it is rather a poise of being of the Supreme who has other poises of being or forms of manifestation. The universe is not an unreality, or an indescribable reality, disconnected with the essence of Brahman; it is rather a rhythmic manifestation of the supreme Brahman. Ignorance is not an indescribable entity neither here nor there, it is a real mode of operation of knowledge itself, —a wonderful contrivance for the descending movement of the Spirit seeking playful self-manifestation in the contraries of His nature. A truly liberated person is one who sees the world in its proper perspective, and perceives the deep significance of life. Emancipated from the bonds of egoity, he realises the universal and the transcendental aspects of his Self. A Superman is one who, having attained liberation, attempts further to bring the fruit of liberation into the temporal flux, and realise it on a universal scale. Having freed himself from conscious identification with the body, he does not rest content with actions performed by his unregenerated body. He turns his body into a perfect instrument of divine activity, having thoroughly transformed it by the light and power of the Supermind. He not only escapes from the darkness of Ignorance, but holds within him the power to transmute that darkness into the illumination of divine manifestation.

SRI AUROBINDO'S VISION OF SUPERMANHOOD

It should be abundantly clear by now that a Superman is essentially a divine man or a thoroughly divinised man. He embodies a perfect fusion of the human and the Divine in him, a total penetration of the human by the Divine, and, in consequence, a self-manifestation of the Divine in terrestrial conditions. Now, mankind is already familiar with the idea of God appearing in human shape, and working under human limitations. "I and my Father in Heaven are one" declares Jesus Christ, and Christianity worships Him as a member of the Divine Trinity. The birth of Christ is, for Christianity, an event of unique significance, God the Son coming into the world for the redemption of sinful and suffering humanity. This is the doctrine of Divine Incarnation. This doctrine (the doctrine of *Avataravada*) is also an essential part of Hinduism. The mystery of Divine Incarnation is, according to the Hindu view, bound up with the mystery of creation itself. If God creates out of the fullness of His joy, He is incarnated to make the joy of creation attain to the height of His glory. It is the self-expansive urge of love or the delight of mutable becoming which explains both. The direct embodiment of the Divine aims at stirring the depths of human love, providing mankind with its supreme object of love in visible and concrete form, and assisting the evolutionary transition from a lower level to a higher level. Now, is there any difference between the Avatar (the Divine Incarnation) and the Divine Man or the Superman? To answer this question very briefly, it may be said that while the Avatar is the Divine directly descended into humanity, the Superman is man integrally transformed into divinity. Both represent the meeting of the human and the Divine, but, while the Avatar comes to lead evolution, the Superman is essentially a product or a flowering of evolution. The principal function of the Avatar is to help evolution forward in its major crises, by bringing about a definite lift in the already attained level of consciousness. Ramchandra was the Incarnation of Righteousness; he succeeded in establishing sattvic (ethical) consciousness on earth. Krishna was the Incarnation who constantly worked from the Overmental plane, and he succeeded in fixing the possibility of the Overmental consciousness on earth. The next Avatar would be the Incarnation of the Supermind. His primary function would be to bring down the Supermind, and make it a permanent ingredient of the earth-consciousness. He would come to carry forward evolution to a higher level, the level of Supermen. While, then, the Avatar is the

embodied Divine, working from different planes at different stages of evolution, the Superman is a definite form of manifestation of the Divine at a particular stage of evolution.

The distinctions that have been drawn above may now be very briefly summed up. A great man is one who overtops others by virtue of an extraordinary development of human qualities. He is uncommon or extra-ordinary but not supra-human. A living liberated man (Jivanmuka) is one who is lifted above the limitations of the human into the limitless freedom of the Spirit. He is supra-human, but not a Superman in the sense in which we have used the term. He is, in a sense, divine, but not a divinised man. As conceived by the Sankhya and the Vedanta, the Jivanmukta transcends the limitations of human existence, but he sees no point in bringing down divine consciousness for a spiritual transformation of the human. An Avatar is the direct Incarnation of God Himself, who comes to assist evolution in its major transitions. He is the Divine in human form, and not a man integrally transformed into a perfect image of the Divine. In the evolutionary transition from the human level to that of the Superman, God has to descend on earth as the supramental Avatar (*Kalki*?) to effect that transition by bringing down the Supermind, and by making it a permanent ingredient of the earth-consciousness. A Superman is the Divine Man, and not the Divine as Man. He is installed in the full freedom of the Spirit, and has all the members of his instrumental being thoroughly transformed by the sovereign dynamism of the Spirit. A Jivanmukta he certainly is, but, what is more, he achieves the liberation not only of his soul, but also of his entire lower nature. His liberation is liberation in Nature, and not simply liberation from Nature. He constantly lives in the divine consciousness, works from the divine consciousness, and functions as a perfect medium of manifestation of the Divine. He is yet to emerge into being, and emerge as the superb flowering of evolution, following in the wake of the Supramental Truth-Consciousness rendered operative on earth.

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Sri Aurobindo and The Hexameter

Blank verse, ever since Shakespeare and Milton gave it the shape of their genius, has been the mould *par excellence* of English poetry. Its unrhymed lines of five feet, variously modulating on the iambic base of a light unstressed syllable followed by a heavy stressed one (x /), have proved capable of equalling the epic effects of the Greek and Latin hexameter. English poets, however, have been haunted by the cadences of the ancient world and have often tried to transfer into their language the hexameter itself—the “heroic” blank verse of Greece and Rome. The mould which Shakespeare and Milton adopted and perfected is unlikely ever to fall into desuetude. It had its birth in the predominantly iambic nature of the English tongue and its span of five feet holds a poetic gesture admirably substantial and balanced for a language which is less polysyllabic than Greek or Latin. But though it has these advantages it has still not the swing and the structural music of the classical hexameter. A good line of Milton’s is nearer the sound of prose than one of Virgil’s. No matter how intense the word and the rhythm, the metrical structure is not as distinct, as markedly harmonious. When Milton writes about Satan :

His form had not yet lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than archangel ruined and the excess
Of glory obscured,

it is not impossible to mistake the description for prose of a highly patterned and euphonious order. But who with a trained ear can mistake for a snatch of prose-sound the Virgilian phrases about the priestess of Apollo ?

Sed pectus anhelum
Et rabie fera corda tument, majorque videri
Nec mortale sonans, afflata est numine quando
Jam propione Dei.*

* But her bosom heaved, her heart swelled with frenzy and she was ampler to behold. Her voice was no longer human, as she sensed the approach and breath of the divine Apollo.

Apart from any difference due to the larger freedom in Latin for poetic word-arrangement, there is here a more outstanding metrical form without yet the least sing-song, a more striking beauty and power in the structure itself.

If the classical hexameter could be "Englishified" our poets would have two sovereign strings to their bow, each with its own special quality. So it is worth asking whence arises the marvellous metrical swing of Homer and Virgil. The classical hexameter is a run of five dactyls ending with a spondee, allowing a substitution anywhere of the first four dactyls by a spondee—the fifth being usually left untouched—and of the terminal spondee by a trochaic foot. But the dactyl, the spondee and the trochee do not mean in Greek and Latin the English / x x, / /, / x. For, poetry in the ancient world was based not on stress but on quantity. Quantity is the time taken by the voice to pronounce the vowel on which a syllable is supported. It reckons syllables as short (\cup) and long (—) instead of light and heavy; a word like "widow" which in English is a trochee or heavy in the first syllable and light in the second would be according to classical quantity an iamb, the first syllable short and the second long. Quantity ruled the metre in Greek and Latin because those languages were highly inflected. Where moods, cases, tenses, genders, numbers vary a great deal, the way a syllable is pronounced alters not merely the rhythm but the actual meaning of a word or a sentence; so the quantity of a syllable gets particularly noted and becomes the most important variable and ultimately the basic determinant of metre. Stress, if any, is allotted a subsidiary role. In English, with its few inflexions, the role of quantity has been so far subsidiary to stress; it does not affect the metre but only the rhythm. It helps euphony, diversifies the pace or else enforces sense by sound, bringing out rhythmically the essence of a thing. How important to poetic effect though not to metre itself the role of quantity often is can be seen from many fine verses—these, for example, from Spenser :

Open the temple gates unto my love,
Open them wide that she may enter in.

The long "o" of "open" vivifies the meaning of that word, the long "a" of "gates" hints the openness which those objects are capable of and which the poet desires to be evoked from them. The long "i" of "wide" needs no explanation. Listen to Tennyson's

And on a sudden lo! the level lake.

Here what adds to the poetic spell of the alliteration is the right sprinkling of long with short vowels in the alliterative words. In "lo!" the vowel, long as well as unclosed by any consonant, gives the broad vista revealed unexpectedly and all at once. In "level", the two short "e"'s bear out the motionless uniformity and evenness of the water that is seen, while the long "a" of "lake" shows us the same water as no small pond but a considerable expanse. Let the ear judge Sri Aurobindo's line from *Love and Death* :

Through the great silence that was now his soul.

The hushing sibilance of it is accompanied by a series of five long vowels, most of which are driven home all the more by strong stresses. the effect is of amplitude, depth and a huge power held in suspense, a psychological effect which could never have been produced by the idea and the experience being partly couched in other vowel-values—say,

Through the great stillness that was now his spirit.

It is clear that quantity is no negligible part of English poetry; but Sri Aurobindo in his masterly essay *On Quantitative Metre* affirms that until it is explicitly and avowedly the base the quality of the ancient hexameter cannot be reproduced. No doubt, that quality is an inner one; the very spirit of the hexameter must be caught, the poet's blood must have the surge of the *Iliad* and the broad even stream of the *Aeneid* before he can play Homer and Virgil in English. Yet a proper sense of the outer form is also needed for the inner spirit to find natural and constant embodiment.

A proper sense : that is the desideratum. Several poets have tried to carry over into English all the rules of quantity obtaining in the classical tongues. Sri Aurobindo does not belong to their school. A Greek or Latin line is never read with primarily an attention to accents : in it the voice has to spread out more evenly, giving each syllable the full sound-value demanded by the inflected character of the language. Up to the very last syllable in the line the voice has to articulate carefully the sounds to get the accurate shade of sense. In English the stresses tend to sweep us on in jump after jump

over the unstressed syllables so that those sounds that have no intrinsic length get somewhat slurred. The more uniform dwelling of the voice along a Greek or Latin line of poetry connects sound to sound in a close bond and confers on each vowel a value due not merely to its intrinsic length or shortness nor even to a shortening or lengthening of it by one or more consonants coming after in the same word, but also to the consonants with which the next word begins. In English the casting back of an influence by the consonants of the next word is not there at all : the word-units are more separate and independent. Even the invariable lengthening of a vowel by two or more consonants in the same word would be arbitrary : the word "length" itself is long by its consonant-load, while the word "shortness" remains short in both syllables in spite of it. The difference in voice-value we feel between these two short syllables arises from the stress on the first. In a noun like " transports " where the same " ort "-sound followed by a consonant is unstressed, the voice passes too rapidly to give us any such distinct feeling. The English ear seldom notes any lingering of the voice over unstressed syllables except where the vowel possesses intrinsic length. If consonant-weight is given a *carte blanche* to lengthen quantity, the sound-effect of many lines of English poetry would suffer. Such lines are expressive in their vowels because they ignore the classical canon. Take one instance : Sri Aurobindo's *Baji Prabhou* begins with a description of an extremely hot " noon of Deccan," making nature and man alike feel

Imprisoned by that bronze and brilliant sky.

It is because the English ear receives a deft accumulation of quantitative shorts in all the important words before that final long "sky" that there is suggested by the vowellation the intense quick-enveloping heat, the cramping unescapable glare, the parching and stifling close atmosphere, narrowing as it were so wide a thing as the sky to a prison in which one could scarcely move and breathe. The consonants in Sri Aurobindo's line, by their number as well as their individual sounds, introduce marked poetic significances : the recurrence of labials before an "r" and nasals neighboured by a sibilant make an impression of aggressive shining strength ; but they do not sufficiently retard the voice to convert an intrinsic short into a long though they may create shades of shortness as they may create also shades of length among longs that are intrinsic. To forget that this is so according to almost a fundamental law in

English would be, in Sri Aurobindo's view, as serious as to forget the stress-stroke. Niggling concessions like saying that mostly the doubled consonant, as in "brilliant", does not double the sound and so must be considered single take too poor an account of the essential *differentia* of English from Greek or Latin: dominant stress. An intrinsic long cannot be wholly denied attention, but generally our voice is whisked away from a short that is without stress, no matter how many consonants may attend on it. Thus the English ear can never accept the fantastic lengthening of the vowel in an insignificant word like "of" in the phrase "of Spring" with which Robert Bridges ends a hexameter line built on classical principles. Just because the "o" is followed by four consonants, one in the word itself and three in the next, it does not lose its shortness and become equal in status to a stressed word like "Spring". As a hexameter close, the words cannot form a spondee. Bridges is not always twisting the English ear with such perversity, he has more genuine endings in a translation from Virgil, but even there the rest of the lines have false quantities too patent to be waived:

As by an | uncer|tain moon|ray secretly il|lumin'd

One goeth | in the | forest when | heav'n is | gloomily | clouded

And black | night hath | robb'd the | colours and | beauty from | all things.

To point out a few artificialities: the first and last syllables of "uncertain", the second of "secretly" and "colours", a flick of a word like "in" or "is" as well as a minor word like "and" or "hath" assume a quantitative length foreign to them in spite of their queues of consonants when the lines are read. In fact, when the lines are read as English poetry the stresses impose themselves on the ear and weave a metrical scheme which is far from giving importance to most of the supposed quantitative longs, and records upon our tympanum no reasonable approximation to the Latin hexameter. The sole resemblance is that in the last two feet of each line accent and length coincide as in Latin. The rest of the feet fail for two reasons: in the first place, the lengths of Bridges are often spurious and, in the second, the English stress is not identical in nature with the Latin accent. Latin, richly inflected, based itself on quantity in its poetic forms, leaving accent to be a minor instrument of rhythm, a high pitch and not a downward weight of the voice. English, poorly inflected, has become stamped with stress, and stress in it can never play the second fiddle. Where

the ear refuses to grow deaf to that stamp or to accept the throw-back of consonantal influence, no amount of Virgilian accent-design, artistry of diction and feel of word-atmosphere on the part of Bridges can recreate in his translation the characteristic structure and rhythm of the original measure :

Quale per̃ incertam lūnam subluce mā̃lignā
 Est iter̃ in sil̃vis, ubi | cælum | condidit | ūmbrā
 Jūpiter, | et rẽbus nox|abstulit | atra cōlōrem.*

The failure of Bridges comes at the end of a long series of failures and drives the last nail into the coffin of strict classical quantity in English.

If quantity is to have its say it must be filled with a true English life, it must be something natural to the language and in tune with its genius of ineffaceable stress. Poets in the past have groped towards a kind of compromise, making stress coincide as much as possible with what they reckoned as length. Their experiments are vitiated by many inconsistencies, hampered as they are because of the obsession of two or more consonants giving length to a vowel preceding them. Sri Aurobindo rejects their false theory and stumbling practice. Quoting Harvey's

Fame with a b̄undance maketh a man thrice b̄lessed and h̄appy

he points out that the word "and" ought by classical rules to be an inexorable long and yet Harvey treats it as a short. Sidney's

These be her words but a woman's words to a love that is cager

draws from him the pertinent query: By what classical rule can the first syllable of "woman's" be regarded as long? By stress alone and not either by intrinsic or indirect dwelling of the voice does it acquire length. Quantity, with Sidney and Harvey, seems fickle and it does not serve any vital purpose: it merely misguides them into scanning syllables like those of "woman's" and the last two of "abundance" as spondaic though the ear flatly contradicts the eye's illusion of a retarding of the voice by a clutter of consonants. When this illusion gets the better of the stress-sense it mars the intended rhythm, as in the line of Sidney's protégé, Abraham Flaunce :

* I am using the sign \ to distinguish the Latin from the English stress,

Whom neither Sāṭhan̄ could daunt nor cōpany helish.

The first three feet can admit of no hexametrical reading of the classical type (dactyls or spondees) if we observe the stresses as indeed we must above anything else in English. Sheer quantity, without the slightest plausible stress, cannot accumulate the voice in the main syllable of a hexameter foot in English: not even intrinsic length has the power to do it, much less a fiction foisted on the language by an exotic analogy. Flaunce's line is more or less a brother to those of Bridges and convinces us that to run with an utterly alien hare and yet try to hunt with a thoroughly English hound produces often a weird medley of movements.

Why not then accept only clear intrinsic length and always fuse stress with it? Will not that give us the perfect English hexameter? The answer is that the demands of such a hexameter will be impossible to fulfil if we are to write with spontaneous ease and not be hindered at every step by an exclusive vocabulary. It may not be beyond a poet's compass to fashion occasional lines to the tune of

Green seas glooming be low now, gray clouds darkening over.

Surely a poet would be gloomed into dejection and darkened by weariness, were he permitted nothing save to dance to a tune so exacting. Words with clear intrinsic length do not strew like Vallombrosan leaves even Greek and Latin: if the help of consonant-load had been swept away, Homer would have been left dumbly twiddling his fingers at his harp and Virgil impotently biting his quill. To dispense with that help and add stress as a *sine qua non* is to hag-ride the poor English hexametrist.

Impatient of preposterous curbs no less than fictitious values and haphazard movements, most poets have chosen to throw overboard all classicism and to construct their hexameters according to the English prosody of heavy and light instead of long and short. Sri Aurobindo recognises the naturalness and flexibility thus brought into the technique, but he is not satisfied with the results offered by the practitioners of the accentual hexameter. There are many reasons why they have not created sustained poetry. Most

of them were not men of first-rate genius. And whatever gifts capable of being kindled to genius at rare moments they had were dimmed by the themes they chose, trivial themes alien to the spirit of the ancient measure, and by the defective metrical form accepted as the stress equivalent of that quantitative mould. The Greek and Latin poets had dealt with subjects evoking naturally the high seriousness, the dynamic vision, the intense æsthesis that were the constituents of their genius. Thus, a medium technically full of rhythmic resources of beauty and power got lifted to climax after climax of epic and pastoral and satire. Where in Longfellow or Clough, the two most famous among the accentual hexametrists, is any burst of climaxes in an adequate medium? Even Kingsley who is better at construction and metre-management has mostly a tenuous rhythm: his meagre talent could not touch his constructive instinct to supreme issues. His constructive instinct itself was impeded at times by the inadequate idea he shared with the others of what the English hexameter should be. The majority of the experimenters do not scruple to make use of weak accents as if they were full stresses: words like "but" and "in" and "if" (intrinsic shorts) can bear a slight accentual pressure in feet of two syllables but in feet of three they prove their weakness too openly unless filled with importance by a peculiar position. Tribachs (three light syllables) are thus cooked up as dactyls without discrimination or limit. Then again, since spondees are none too easily found in English to replace dactyls, trochees run riot as modulations; but the trochee, if it comes in too frequently without being justified by the sense and by a subtle rhythmic need, ruins the metre and substitutes the variety of a lifeless jogtrot for the monotony of a mechanical canter. A modulation other than the spondee or trochee to substitute the dactyl was never consciously admitted as part of the technique: hence, though employed here and there, it could not be utilised to the top of its potentialities. Even in the hands of a poet finer than Kingsley, Clough or Longfellow, the movement lacks ease and power except for a few almost accidental steps. Here is a translation from the *Iliad* by George Meredith:

Now, as when fire voracious catches the unclipped woodland,
This way bears it and that the great whirl of the wind and the
scrubwood

Stretches upturn, flung forward alength by the fire's fury raging,
 So beneath Atreides Agramemnon heads of the scattered
 Trojans fell, and in numbers amany the horses, neck-stiffened,
 Rattled their vacant cars down the roadway gaps of the warfield.
 Missing their blameless charioteers, but for these, they were
 outstretched.
 Flat upon earth, far dearer to vultures than to their home-mates,

Another passage by the same poet is about Zeus speaking to the weeping horses of Achilles:

Now when the issue of Kronos beheld that sorrow his head shook
 Pitying them for their grief, these words then he spoke in
 his bosom:
 "Why, ye hapless gave we to Peleus, you to a mortal
 Master; ye that are ageless both ye, both of you deathless!
 Was it that ye among men most wretched should come to have
 heart-grief?
 'Tis most true, than the race of these men is there wretcheder
 nowhere
 Aught over earth's range found that is gifted with breath and
 has movement."

Some lines are definitely good, their rhythm comes living to us and their structure is firm yet flexible. But the general impression both the quotations give is of a deliberate artificial rush or run and there is considerable jolting if not limping. Meredith introduces with success a large number of spondees, especially at the end of his lines: spondees either by stress alone or stress and quantity. He has also a skilful enjambement, a running-over from line to line. Admirable is the effect of mobile force and volume in the second line overlapping the third in the account of Agamemnon in the fight. Almost as fine in its own way is the note of pathos, pausing and progressing, with a suggestive burden of repetition, in the two opening lines, beautifully enjambed, of the speech of Zeus—"Why, ye hapless...." The sixth line of the first excerpt and the last of the second are not unsatisfying. Nevertheless we are left disappointed with the sum total. If we were to give a summary description, no better would be to hand than two phrases picked out from

the passages themselves : the first passage seems on the whole "neck-stiffened", the second "flat upon earth".

These labels can be attached to nearly all the accentual hexameters written by English poets. Sri Aurobindo believes that there is a flaw at the very source of them : the mould through which the poetry flows is ill-fitted for sustained inspiration. He declares that though whatever is radically un-English in the classical rules has to be brushed aside and though we cannot ignore stress in forming our feet we still cannot catch the characteristic structure and rhythm of the old hexameter without keeping quantity as the base. A veritable paradox, this—until we realise how Sri Aurobindo views stress.

Perhaps the best approach to Sri Aurobindo's view is by way of his pronouncement on the backward influence of consonants. An intrinsic short becomes long in the classical languages by being buttressed up with consonants, but, as we have seen, the English stress whips away our voice from all places that are unstressed and at the same time have no intrinsic length to make the voice linger. The special force of the ictus robs unstressed short syllables from getting the length they would if the ictus did not operate, if it did not take to itself the mass of voice which would otherwise go to them. This means that there is a transference of voice-mass, the stressed syllable appropriating what would render the unstressed intrinsic short a long one in languages that are not governed primarily by stress. An equivalent, therefore, of length which was caused by consonantal crowding-in Greek or Latin is in English collected wherever stress falls. Stress appears from this angle a quantity-builder, a creator of metrical length independent of the intrinsic value of the syllable which stands under it. That it should be a quantity-builder is but natural; for what after all is stress in terms of voice-value? It is like a hammer-stroke driving a syllable firmly in for other syllables that are unstressed to hang or take support on in a metrical foot. Its function is not dissimilar to that of length in a Greek or Latin foot; it confers importance and strength on a syllable. The sole difference is that stress gives strength and importance from above, by a vertical pressure or weight of the voice, and length in the classical sense does it by a stretching of the voice, by laying a horizontal weight-bar. Even an intrinsically short syllable becomes through stress a support for unstressed longs : if no special strength, weight or mass of voice

accrued to it, foot-building upon it would be impossible. Quantity makes the voice dwell more on a syllable, stress does the same, though by a different method and though that kind of increased dwelling has *nuances* according as the stressed syllable is intrinsically short or long. Such *nuances* often serve to create subtle psychologies of sound which render the sense inwardly vibrant and vivid to our consciousness. They do not change the fundamental mass of voice collected by stress. Longs and shorts place themselves under one general category of metrical length when the ictus falls on them fully and emphatically and is no mere voice-inflexion as in words like "is" and "have" which carry a weak accent except by a certain pattern of the syntax. Sri Aurobindo is the first to look on stress in a quantitative light with a confident sweeping gesture of finality, even as he is the first to crush uncompromisingly the fallacy of the general throw-back of consonantal influence on quantity in English—and that is what makes really original his loosening of the knot of the hexameter. His view is not just a juggling with names, an arbitrary and otiose⁴ labelling. The quantitative light leads to a form other than the current accentual one. The accentual hexameter takes no stock of the unstressed intrinsic long: it sets out to deal only with stress. Sri Aurobindo builds with two factors: the length of stress and the length of the unstressed natural long. The former must always take precedence in English and constitute the main syllable of a hexameter foot, but if the latter is consciously acknowledged as having a say in metre, then a principle of construction is brought out, which is obscured in the conventional mould but which is absolutely essential in order to catch the spirit of the old hexameter, for, without letting intrinsic longs come by their due we cannot hope to catch fully that quantitative spirit.

Not that we must have unaccented longs everywhere. Swinburne's

Sudden and steady the music as eight hoofs trample and thunder

is as perfectly Virgilian in its ring as Virgil's own

Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*

and Virgilian too is Whitman's cadence—

Silent, avoiding the moon-beams, blending myself with the shadows.

* "With a four-footed din the horse-hooves trample the crumbling plain"

The unaccented long is not at play in the Swinburne line, while in the Whitman it comes only in the final syllable but does not bring out any revolutionary principle. Here the classical structure-music and rhythm-soul are kept by means of the sheer quantity-building of stress. The field of construction, however, is much narrowed down if we do not see that when the Biblical

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning ?

or that verse detachable from the semi-burlesque mock-heroic context of Clough's *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich*.

He like a god came leaving his ample Olympian chamber

has the true Homeric note in movement and rhythm and structural swing, another quantity-value than stress-length also claims our notice. In the quotation from Clough the first foot has the word "like" which is intrinsically long: in combination with the stressed "he" and the unstressed "a" it forms to the ear a quantitative anti-bacchius (— — ◡). Similarly, in the apostrophe to Lucifer, the sound-value of "thou" and "art" join with the stressed "how" to create on a quantitative basis a light molossus (— — —), light because there is not the same weight of accent on the three words. We thus have modulations unrealised in the accentual scansion. The accentual hexameter accepts the dactyl as the only trisyllabic foot permissible. No doubt the dactyl must predominate, but the quantitative nature of the true hexameter compels us to reckon with the unstressed long as part of the metre and on that reckoning the dactyl cannot ever in English be the all-sufficient foot. And once we accept non-dactylic trisyllabled modulations there is no reason why the new feet should have only the unstressed long as their part determinant. There is room too for other stresses than the main one at the beginning of the foot. Such modulations are even less realised in the accentual mould. The quantitative basis leads to them as an inevitable logical result and opens a wide avenue of escape from the monotony to which the accentual hexametrists have condemned their mould by the somewhat paradoxical procedure of trying not a whit to preserve the quantitative spirit of the classical hexameter and trying their utmost to imitate the type of feet prevalent in it. Save for the license of using a tróchee anywhere in lieu of a spondee, they have worshipped blindly the classical norm. The hexameter of Homer and Virgil, like all other metrical

We are faced here as in most of his other hexametrical successes with a telling departure from the conventional modulations of the accentual mould. The third foot—"that the ^xgreat"—is no dactyl or spondee, or trochee. It is a cretic and both by its extra weight and its originality of movement it adds to the vitality and suggestion of the initial spondee and the whirling dactyls in the rest of the line. The next line is also expressively footed: a strong spondee and two dactyls, one on either side of it, represent in the first half the ravage of the trees and their heavy falling and being flung out on the ground, while in the second half there is an anti-bacchius—"fire's ^xfury"—between a dactyl and a trochee, making us feel a fierce dense power which is intensified by the alliteration and the intrinsic vowel-lengths. But these wonderful effects happen freakishly in the accentual system, they are no acknowledged feature of the technique. And where they do happen, not even the strong stresses prevent them from losing a little of their sound-values. "That the great" takes the primary stress according to the norm of dactylic accentuation on "that". Neither the intrinsic nor the stress length of "great" is brought out *in toto*. We are led somewhat to muffle them in order to make the foot adactyl. If an instrument like the kymograph which measures speech in hundredths of a second recorded this foot as part of the accentual dactylic line in which it occurs, it would show the time of 'that' as longer than the time of 'great' even though the ictus falls on both and the intrinsic quantity of the former is short and of the latter long. A quantitative system in which stress remains effective in the main syllable of a foot but without the dactylic tyranny of the accentual base would stop this falsification. Unstressed longs in clear metrical power are needed by the English hexameter to achieve a rhythmic kinship to the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*; unusual stress-combinations are needed by it to acquire a pliancy in keeping with all other metrical patterns in English. To give these two factors of foot-construction a many-shaded naturalness and a thorough sound-value Sri Aurobindo's vision of the hexameter with a quantitative light on stress is ideally called for.

Suitable foot-changes, of course, are not the only things required for breathing life into the hexameter. The accent-stroke must fall suggestively now on intrinsic longs, now on intrinsic shorts. There must be a sensitive placing of the pauses and occasional overflow from one line to another.

Word-grouping and sentence-structure must be attended to. A subtle play of vowelisation and consonant harmonies must bring the ear relief and pleasure. Indeed, there is no end of technical skill wanted or practicable. But nowhere should the technique be handled mechanically. An inner cry for variety must get answered wherever the poet takes the help of the artist. It is the unrestricted and unjustified trochaic modulations in Clough that kill the soul of the hexameter rhythm in his verse. What makes Longfellow tame and anaemic is the insensitive plethora of basic beats. Kingsley is spoiled by his thinness of inspiration, his instinctive skill as technician counterbalanced by his inanity as poet. All of them and many others like Meredith suffer to a more or less degree from a low level of poetic afflatus on the one hand and on the other an unconsciousness of the true nature and art of the hexameter in its English rebirth. The level is to a considerable extent dragged down by the feeling of fumbling in a half-realised medium, the incubus of conducting an experiment under semi-artificial conditions. Skill without proper insight into what the character and possibilities of the medium are, inspiration without the power either to sustain it or to apply it rightly—these have been the defects of all the past endeavours. Sri Aurobindo's eminence in this field lies in his fusing a deep and plenary breath of inspiration with a wide-eyed artistry that is attuned to the soul both of classical and English poetics.

It is not in the hexameter alone that Sri Aurobindo succeeds. Many kinds of quantitative verse he has revived in forms natural to English. Alcaics, Sapphics and several less-known varieties make up the series of examples that follow his essay on quantitative metre. His hexametrical composition, however, is the most important, for it tackles the chief knot of the quantitative problem. To loosen that knot for good, an actual masterpiece must be brought forth—harmonies that live before us and can lay an impregnating touch on future poets. It is one thing to theorise brilliantly, quite another to embody the theory in poetic practice and roll out grand rhythms. But Sri Aurobindo laughs at difficulties. With supreme audacity he evokes the name of Homer himself by calling his poem *Ilion*. *Ilion* is a fragment of 374 lines—a first glimpse given us of a long epic lying unfinished among the manuscripts of Sri Aurobindo the poet for whom Sri Aurobindo the yogi is able to find meagre time. But certain facts serve to focus our scrutiny upon it almost as if it were a full-blown epic. It is written in a metre whose large promise has

scarcely been fulfilled so far ; this would render an inspired use of that metre for a few hundred lines a major achievement. Further, its deliberate choice of Homer's theme in a metre that reached its acme in the *Iliad* challenges antiquity's loftiest poetic creation and leads us to dwell on quality and ignore bulk, since to Homerise for even a few hundred lines would be to sit among the utterly elect.

Can *Ilion* be called Homeric in any valid connotation of the term ? The term may be taken to mean two things—the mind of Homer and the poetic art of Homer. To both must Sri Aurobindo bring a basic resemblance if his *Ilion* is to be Homeric to the full. Basic—and not superficial : that point is important. Sri Aurobindo need not ask himself at every turn : Am I thinking and feeling precisely as Homer would *vis-a-vis* the same object, event or situation ? Such a similarity is neither possible nor desirable : it would impair the spontaneous evolving of a poetic work. What Sri Aurobindo, having picked out Homer's theme for a new treatment, must do is to preserve in the midst of his own individual psychology Homer's fundamental bent of mind and Homer's general world-view. One cannot, with a mental bent and a world-view poles apart from Homer's, write naturally about the Heroic Age of the *Iliad*. Whatever differences there may be should be delicately adjusted. Sri Aurobindo's mind is complex and many-dimensional, at once more sensuous, more philosophical and more spiritual than Homer's. But there is in it an insistent objectivity which, for all the un-Homeric spheres of consciousness objectified or symbolised by him, kins him to the ancient bard's constant look outward on clear-cut shape and gesture, attitude and motion. As a rule, Sri Aurobindo's imagination is subtler, seeking comparisons and contrasts in rarer *nuances* of life's and Nature's moods, in less familiar phenomena than are caught in Homer's celebrated similes. Still, there is no taint of conceit or sophistication : the images have an untortured appeal, a fine elemental touch across their subtlety. He has also a less austere and less limited use of colour ; and his colour comes from a gaze thrown outward from a more inward consciousness, so that, though he loses no jot of the breadth and vehemence and poignancy of physical existence, he wraps them in an atmosphere of the Unknown and the Divine in an intenser and deeper way than Homer. He takes care, nevertheless not to exceed the Greek

sense of the deific. Within that sense he gives rein to his profound Indian awareness and understanding of the Spiritual. The Greek *theos* is not merely a super-splendid form acting from without on human beings; it is also a super-conscious force acting from within—and it is more than a personal entity. Behind the anthropomorphic and the divinely statuesque, behind the impalpable and the divinely psychological, there are vastnesses, pervasive world-wills employing the outward or the inward as a focus for their mysterious rule over all the desires and emotions of men and the vicissitudes of life. This mysterious rule, this overshadow of Fate Sri Aurobindo expresses more consciously and with greater explicitness than Homer. Not that he lets the Indian insight obtrude upon the Greek vision: only, this insight helps the essence of that vision to emerge more luminously. He is, therefore, Aurobindonian without ceasing to be basically Homeric. The same applies to his poetic art. If the style is anything of the man, we cannot expect Sri Aurobindo to duplicate Homer's precise brand of epic expression. It is a certain essence of Homer that he must retain. The texture of the language, the quality and rhythm of the words, separate as well as combined, must not be thin nor cheap nor crude; neither must it be affected. The metrical workmanship must not be rough and loose on the one hand, nor too smart and regimented on the other. Everywhere there must be splendour and smoothness—and yet a certain simplicity and strength. No exotic exclusiveness in the splendid language-texture, no over-artistry or exquisite monotony in the smooth metre-movement; both must have a strong direct varied life, they must seem to belong to Nature, the free and large and open stretches of wind and wave. So long as Sri Aurobindo does not lack these essentials he remains Homeric, even if he has more multiplicity within his unity than Homer and his wind blows from directions uncommon to Hellas and his wave has more complex curves than the Aegean Sea.

Ilion commences with a new day breaking over the besieged city:—

Dawn in her journey eternal compelling the labour of mortals,
 Dawn the beginner of things with the night for their rest or their
 Pallid and bright-lipped arrived from the mists and the chill ending,
 Euxine.

Earth in the dawn-fire delivered from starry and shadowy vastness
 Woke to the wonder of life and its passion and sorrow and beauty,
 All on her bosom sustaining, the patient compassionate Mother.
 Out of the formless vision of Night with its look on things hidden,
 Given to the gaze of the azure she lay in her garment of greenness
 Wearing light on her brow. In the dawn-ray lofty and voiceless
 Ida climbed with her god-haunted peaks into diamond lustres,
 Ida first of the hills with the ranges silent beyond her
 Watching the dawn in their giant companies, as since the ages
 First began they had watched her, upbearing Time on their summits.
 Troas cold on her plain awaited the boon of the sunshine.
 There, like a hope through an emerald dream sole-pacing for ever,
 Stealing to wideness beyond, crept Simois lame in his currents,
 Guiding his argent thread mid the green of the reeds and the grasses.
 Headlong, impatient of Space and its boundaries, Time and its slowness,
 Xanthus clamoured aloud as he ran to the far-surgings waters,
 Joining his call to the many-voiced roar of the mighty Aegean,
 Answering Ocean's limitless cry like a whelp to its parent.
 Forests looked up through their rifts, the ravines grew aware of their
 shadows.

Closer now gliding glimmered the golden feet of the goddess.
 Over the hills and the headlands spreading her garment of splendour,
 Fateful she came with her eyes impartial looking on all things,
 Bringer to man of the day of his fortune and day of his downfall.
 Full of her luminous errand, careless of eve and its weeping.
 Fateful she paused unconcerned above Ilion's mystic greatness,
 Domes like shimmering tongues of the crystal flames of the morning,
 Opalesque rhythm-line of tower-tops, notes of the lyre of the sun-god.
 High over all that a nation had built and its love and its laughter,
 Lighting the last time highway and homestead, market and temple,
 Looking on men who must die and women destined to sorrow,
 Looking on beauty fire must lay low and the sickle of slaughter,
 Fateful she lifted the doom-scroll red with the script of the Immortals,
 Deep in the invisible air that folds in the race and its morrows
 Fixed it, and passed on smiling the smile of the griefless and deathless,
 Dealers of death though death they know not, who in the morning

Scatter the seed of the event for the reaping ready at nightfall
 Over the brooding of plains and the agelong trance of the summits
 Out of the sun and its spaces she came, pausing tranquil and fatal,
 And, at a distance followed by the golden herds of the sungod,
 Carried the burden of Light and its riddle and danger to Hellas.

No doubt can be entertained about the magnificence of these lines. The Olympian measure of the ancients is once more abroad. It is not the use of Homeric locutions like "god-haunted peaks" and "the many-voiced roar" that affine these verses to Homer: it is the majestic energy of the words and the speed and sinuousness and sonority of their rhythms that put them on a par with the spirit of the *Iliad*. And these elements preserve that spirit even though Homer, treating the same scene, would have had a less "inward" description of things nor dwelt so much with a revealing eye on the divinity of his "rosy-fingered Dawn". At last the power and beauty of the old quantitative hexameter has come into its own in the English language. At last there is the absolute control which incessantly varies the music without hurting the instrument. Each line is alert with its undulating or bounding life and all the lines hang together with an underlying master-note building up a significant sum-total of harmony. The dactyls ring out clear and full, there is no shirking their insistence, they get all the strength they can by emphatic stresses and all the variety they need by the meaningful stroke of the stress on intrinsic longs or intrinsic shorts. Where they yield to modulations it is not just to placate an academic law. The spondaic and trochaic units are spontaneous and purposeful. Here is the former endowing by a double accent-weight plus a double intrinsic length the words with a poised portentousness in almost the middle of a line otherwise normal except for a slight divergence in the penultimate foot:

Fateful she|lifted the|doom-scroll|red with the|script of the Im|mortals.

No better instance of the suggestive trouchée can be demanded than

Looking on|men who must|die and|women|destined to|sorrow,

where in fact two trochees are next to each other, a perilous situation which yet saves itself most triumphantly by rhythmically inducing a keen feeling the

normal dactyls would quite destroy. Remove the unusual turn of sound, rewrite either

Looking on men who must | dīe and on | wōmen | destined to sōrrow
or

Looking on men who must | dīe and | wōmen | pre | destined to sorrow
or else

Looking on men who must | dīe and on | wōmen pre | destined to sorrow :

and what you have is in different degrees of formality a metricised statement instead of moving poetry. The dropped syllables which cause the trochees in the place of dactyls are here like a catch in the breath followed by a missed heartbeat: they create unexpectedly a depth of emotion. Equally appropriate are other departures from the base, daring trisyllabic departures which get their whole significant and rhythmic value in a quantitative system. A line early in the passage,

Earth in the | dawn-fire delivered from | starry and | shadowy | vastness,

possesses its superb poetic quality with the help not only of imaginative words playing alliteration and assonance but also by its stressed and unstressed intrinsic longs one after another and its two modulations. The modulations are in both places the anti-bacchius. The characteristic of the anti-bacchius (— — ◡) is a massing without any curbed or thickened effect. If spondees had been used, the line would have lost all its joint sense of vastness and deliverance. Neither dactyls nor trochees would have done the necessary massing which the two anti-bacchiuses carry out in their own dissimilar ways. The anti-bacchius of "shadowy" indicates the mass of night, the huge star-sprinkled and star-distanced gloom, but since the mass is not close-packed and the gloom has a tenuous largeness their peculiarity is rhythmised to us by the stress being only on one syllable and that syllable an intrinsic short while the intrinsic long is left unstressed like the short immediately after and, besides being left unstressed, made perhaps to have even its length slightly shaded off by the vowel-sound following its "o"-sound. A different psychology is held by the anti-bacchius in which "dawn-fire" makes the massing. Both the words are natural longs and both are stressed: an intense concentration is indicated, in keeping with the idea of the gathering dense light of the sun.

The final unstressed short which thins out or loosens out the foot brings the delivering movement whereby the earth emerges into day from the ambiguous infinity of the dark hours—a movement which is continued in the next foot, a dactyl, in which even the stressed syllable is a natural short like the others that are without the accent. What adds to the suggestive metrical architecture is that the two anti-bacchiuses with their differing psychological burdens are balanced against each other by being made to stand as the second foot from either end of the line.

Art alone cannot introduce such technical subtleties: it is the afflatus, the poetic frenzy which mostly bears art with it to felicitous goals. An awareness, however, of technical resources is needed when handling a difficult measure. The anti-bacchius is a very natural substitute for a dactyl and is likely to be the most frequent—the artist can depend upon the poet to employ it almost automatically at the dictate of inspiration. The cretic (— ◡ —) is not so easy to throw in and the artist has to aid the poet in giving it birth successfully. In

Looking on | beauty | fire must lay | low and the | sickle of | slaughter

it stands with a special ferocity after a delicate trochee: a relentless and unescapable force is felt in it as though the devastation in wait for delicate and beautiful things were exemplified in that hemming in of a short syllable between two emphatic longs. The line—

Forests looked | up through their | rifts, the ravines grew
aware of their | shadows—

has a suddenness in its opening cretic perfectly in tune with the meaning. The green darkness discovers that light comes in through the spaces between tree and tree, branch and branch, spaces the night had seemed to efface with its obscurity. The surprise of the discovery draws the sight upward through those forgotten spaces and the suddenness of that upward look is caught in the stressed syllable occurring where an unstressed one was expected to finish a dactyl.

The entire passage teems with technical felicities. Nowhere do they appear mechanical. They are fused indissolubly with the poetic urge. Even the initial tribrach in

And, at a distance followed by the golden herds of the sungod,

justifies itself as it rarely does in past experiments with the English hexameter. Now the three shorts coming close together before the first stress-long produces precisely the impression of an unfilled gap, a distance, between Aurora and the sungod's golden herds. How well also is the rest of the line "footed"! The words "followed by the" form what is known as the ionic *a majore* (- - ∪ ∪). The extreme length of the foot with its equal division into two longs and two shorts hints to the ear the massed herds crowding forward from afar to the empty air-fields ahead.

A level of inspiration and technique like that of the prelude of *Ilion* is beyond the compass of any poet to maintain over hundreds of lines. But it is not beyond the compass of the truly great to link up such heights by verse sufficiently strong and rhythmic in between. In Sri Aurobindo's hexameters there is never a drop into flatness and atony. Fresh and happy effects are never lacking and from them he soars again and again to climaxes. Perhaps a typical passage showing the small variations of his poetic level is the one in which he prepares the coming of the herald from Argos to Troy in the first day-light. After a memorable line which says that when a mighty moment loaded with a catastrophic future arrives

Only its face and its feet are seen, not the burden it carries,

there is a patch of slightly mixed inspiration about the significance of coming events being hidden from us by life's superficial clamour, hidden to such a degree that at times "least knows the messenger chosen for the summons" :

Only he listens to the voice of his thoughts, his heart's ignorant whisper,
Whistle of winds in the tree-tops of Time and the rustle of Nature.
Now too the messenger hastened driving the car of the errand :
Even while dawn was a gleam in the East, he had cried to his coursers.
Half yet awake in light's turrets started the scouts of the morning,
Hearing the jar of the wheels and the throb of the hooves' exultation,
Hooves of the horses of Greece as they galloped to Phrygian Troya.
Proudly they trampled through Xanthus thwarting the foam of his
anger,

Whinaying high as in scorn crossed Simois' tangled currents,
 Xanthus' reed-girdled twin, the gentle and sluggish river.
 Then comes a high peak of poetry—not so brilliant as the Dawn-
 description but austere effective with its few bold antithetical strokes:
 A momentous picture is drawn before our eyes :

One and unarmed in the car was the driver ; grey was he, shrunken,
 Worn with his decades . To Pergama cinctured with strength
 Cyclopean,
 Old and alone he arrived, insignificant, feeblest of mortals,
 Carrying Fate in his helpless hands and the doom of an empire.

The picture is authentic Homer, the same directness and the same depth.
 The rhythm has a full vitality, whether in its curbed or its sweeping form.
 The pauses are varied in each line, their number and position determined by
 an inspiration that knows how to match the outer with the inner movement.
 The next line is as fine in suggestion and as Homeric :

Ilion, couchant, saw him arrive from the sea and the darkness.

With the mention of Ilion, the picture shifts to the city itself and to the faint
 slow stirrings of life in it. The news that Talthybius the herald stands parleying
 at the Trojan gates goes to Deiphobus, one of Priam's sons. He is wrapt in
 "scenes of a vivider world", the grandiose dreams natural to the slumber of
 a warrior-soul, but suddenly he is drawn back from them by the high and
 insistent call of the warders. The lines which show him awaking to
 "the pull of the conscious thread of the earth-bond" throw up by a masterly
 final phrase the whole figure and being of Deiphobus :

Warned by his body, Deiphobus, reached in that splendid remoteness,
 Touched through the nerve-ways of life that branch to the brain of the
 dreamer,
 Heard the terrestrial call and slumber startled receded
 Sliding like dew from the mane of a lion.

The effect of this Shakespearian simile* is reinforced a little later by a line
 wholly trochaic save for the opening foot. The row of trochees here is

* Cf. TROILUS & CRESSIDA, Act III, Scene 3; Patroclus tells how Cupid will unloose his "amorous
 fold" from Achilles's neck.

And like a dew-drop from the lion's mane
 Be shook to air.

not as in Clough 'a crude meaningless modulation : it is significant of the big bulk of Deiphobus firmly yet gradually leaving his royal bed :

He from the carven couch upreared his giant stature.

The aptness of this metrical movement is rivalled by a line at almost the close of *Ilion*. There it is Aeneas who is spoken of, called out to attend the assembly planned by Deiphobus for hearing the secret message which Talthybius bears. There it is spondees in succession, representing the movement of Aeneas's powerful body filled with heavy brooding on high matters :

Fate-weighed up Troy's slope strode musing strong Aeneas.

Sri Aurobindo is expert at wedding his metrical rhythm no less than his language to the substance of his thought. The physical and the psychological are also a unity with him or else they run suggestively parallel as when

Deiphobus slowly,
Measuring Fate with his thoughts in the troubled vasts of
his spirit,
Back through the stir of the city returned to the house of
his fathers,
Taming his mighty stride to the pace infirm of the Argive.

The second line where the long and large-breath'd delivery of the hexameter is sublimely utilised to describe the mind of Deiphobus finds a sort of paradoxical correspondence in the last where the inner process of measuring Fate seems carried to the outer act of walking in step with the frail Talthybius who is the messenger of unknown destiny.

Not only the acts of human beings but the appearances of places too Sri Aurobindo can press to psychological ends. Thrasy-machus, "the fleetest of foot in the gateway", is commissioned by Deiphobus to bring Aeneas: reaching Aeneas' house,

, on the threshold Thrasy-machus halted
Looking for servant or guard, but felt only a liveness of slumber
Drawing the soul's sight within away from its life and things human;
Soundless, unheeding, the vacant corridors fled into darkness,

SRI AURÔBINDO AND THE HEXAMETER

A symbol poetically arresting and yet most naturally arising in the course of the narrative is created here, making concrete to the most material point of outwardness a mental state. Nor could anything except the spirit and sound of the hexameter have caught so well the symbolic substance of that closing line. The extensive corridors' unheeding flight into the unseen could not have been given its inevitable word-value and sound-value in a shorter span of line and another foot-pattern. It is the length of the hexameter and the characteristic motion of it towards that final trochee's indefinite dying away on an unstressed syllable—it is these qualities alone that have captured in one single revealing line the precise sense and psychological atmosphere Sri Aurobindo had in view. This verse like several others in *Iliad* is proof of Sri Aurobindo's bringing forth his hexameters from a genuine seizing of the very soul of that measure. When we feel that no form but the one adopted could have been adequate we have a disclosure of the poet's absolute intimacy with the essence of his medium.

The psychological subtlety which, without the least trace of the involved or the ingenious, pervades Sri Aurobindo's hexameters widens and deepens into a mystical seerhood when he speaks of the invisible hands pressing the balance of war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The Gods of Hellas stand now in the full glory of their occult presences—occult but still concrete, held in a living poetic realisation. The passage about them equals the Dawn-prelude by an afflatus sustained through most of it on a supreme height. There are three movements in this symphony. First the superhuman beings are pictured in their dynamic forms and outward activities: from the peaks of Olympus and Ida—

Gleaming and clanging the gods of the antique ages descended,
Hidden from human knowledge the brilliant shapes of the Immortals
Mingled unseen in the mellay, or sometimes, marvellous, maskless,
Forms of undying beauty and power that made tremble the heart-strings

Parting their deathless secrecy crossed through the borders of vision,
Plain as of old to the demigods out of their glory emerging,
Heard by mortal ears and seen by the eyeballs that perish.

Then the inner consciousness which these shapes symbolise and focus is evoked, with all its tremendous breadth and plunge :

Mighty they came from their spaces of freedom and sorrowless splendour,

Sea-vast, trailing the azure hem of his clamorous waters,
Blue-lidded, maned with the Night, Poseidon smote for the future,
Earth-shaker who with his trident releases the coils of the Dragon,
Freeing the forces unborn that are locked in the caverns of Nature.
Calm and unmoved, upholding the Word that is Fate and the order
Fixed in the sight of a will foreknowing and silent and changeless
Here sent by Zeus and Athenè lifting his aegis

Guarded the hidden decree. But for Ilion, loud as the surges,
Arès impetuous called to the fire in men's hearts, and his passion
Woke in the shadowy depths the forms of the Titan and demon ;
Dumb and coerced by the grip of the gods in the abyss of the being,
Formidable, veiled they sit in the grey subconscious darkness
Watching the sleep of the snake-haired Erinnys. Miracled, haloed,
Seer and magician and prophet who beholds what the thought cannot
witness,

Lifting the godhead within us to a more than human endeavour,
Slayer and saviour, thinker and mystic, leaped from his sun-peaks
Guarding in Ilion the wall of his mysteries Delphic Apollo.
Heaven's strengths divided swayed in the whirl of the Earth-force.

The first five lines lift the hexameter to a *ne plus ultra* of poetically intense as well as mystically vivid grandeur. An ether, immense and luminous, seems to draw near and envelop us, bringing the God-forms closer and closer, with Poseidon looming large in the fore-front and growing more and more clear both to the outer eye and the inner perception until we enter into his very self and discover the strange dynamis of him and at the same moment the unknown regions of our own psychology and of world-consciousness break open to our occult senses. The subliminal of Freud and Jung are lit up, the weird enormous potencies of the primitive and the elemental are touched, by a might and a majesty out of some supraliminal undreamt of by our psycho-analysts. A revelation as powerful and profoundly

realistic but of a different realm of the subliminal is upon us in the poetry that seizes the secret of Arès. Each word, each phrase, each line is packed with the occult life and the hidden hungers below our day-to-day normal mind, volcanic secrets at a tension within us waiting to snap the bonds of reason and fling up their wild lava. Sri Aurobindo is at his most overwhelming in these wide yet accurate plumbings of the psycho-analyst's domain by means of a poetry kindled as if on an altitude that sees things from beyond the mind's imagination and sends down rhythmic reflections of them with a moving and penetrating power impossible except to a Yogi. Here we have Homeric figures driven with a Homeric energy to an Aurobindonian goal. Less Yogic, however, is the light thrown on Herè and Athenè and Apollo. The tone and texture of the language presenting them is in keeping with their call to and contact with more evolved strata of our consciousness: it is not the dense and dreadful subliminal that is awakened but the brighter parts of our nature, the high and subtle thought, the keen and ecstatic heart-impulse. Still, one cannot help wishing that an intenser vision from a mystical standpoint had brought those deific presences home to these parts. No criticism can be made of the poetry: the sole regret we can allow ourselves is that though the poetry is Homeric enough it is not sufficiently Aurobindonian.

The third movement of the apocalypse gives us the occult reason why the siege of Troy lasted all those ten long years. Long for the human participants, not for "heaven's strengths" dividing themselves between Greece and Troy. No issue seemed forthcoming for the human fighters, since the divine forces were working out their own play:

All went backwards and forwards tossed in the swing of the death-game,
 Vain was the toil of the heroes, the blood of the mighty was squandered.
 Spray as of surf on the cliffs when it moans unappeased, unrequited
 Age after fruitless age. Day hunted the steps of the nightfall;
 Joy succeeded to grief; defeat only greatened the vanquished,
 Victory offered an empty delight without guerdon or profit.
 End there was none of the effort and end there was none of the failure.
 Triumph and agony changing hands in a desperate measure
 Faced and turned as a man and a maiden trampling the grasses
 Face and turn and they laugh in their joy of the dance and each other.
 These were gods and they trampled lives.

The simile in these verses is at once charming and sinister. The beautifully radiant and yet, from the human angle, heartless omnipotence of the gods gets perfectly embodied and becomes all the more striking by contrast with the dubious perplexing aspect of the war presented in the first half of the passage.

Fine as this simile is, it is not the top of Sri Aurobindo's figurative bent. The magnitude his imagery can attain is best laid bare when he tells us of Deiphobus as seen by the Immortals after they had stopped their play with Troy and withdrawn from the battle, the issue already decided by them, the heroes "slain in their minds, Troy burned, Greece left to her glory and downfall." The protagonists on both sides felt a respite from the burden of the gods, a relief from the tireless energy goading them on, but the old zest went out, the support of the divine content departed. Wearily now the combat swayed and a sullenness hung on the besieging tents :

But not alone on the Achaians the steps of the moments fell heavy ;
Slowly the shadow deepened on Ilion mighty and scornful ;
Dragging her days went by ; in the rear of the hearts of her people
Something that knew what they dared not know and the mind would

not utter,

Something that smote at her soul of defiance and beauty and laughter
Darkened the hours. For Doom in her sombre and giant uprising
Neared, assailing the skies ; the sense of her lived in all pastimes ;
Time was pursued by unease and a terror woke in the midnight :
Even the ramparts felt her, stones that the gods had erected.
Now no longer she dallied and played, but bounded and hastened,
Seeing before her the end and imagining massacre calmly,
Laughed and admired the flames and rejoiced in the cry of the captives.
Under her, dead to the watching immortals, Deiphobus hastened
Clanging in arms through the streets of the beautiful insolent city,
Brilliant, a gleaming husk but empty and left by the daemon.
Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces,
Seen in its form by men, but itself goes phantom-like fleeting
Void and null and dark through the uncaring infinite vastness,
So now he seemed to the sight that sees all things from the Real.

Timeless its vision of Time creates the hour by things coming,
 Borne on a force from the past and no more by a power for the future
 Mighty and bright was his body, but shadowy the shape of his spirit
 Only an eidolon seemed of the being that had lived in him, fleeting
 Vague like a phantom seen by the dim Acherontian waters.

It is a question whether in the entire range of similes there has been one so grandly apt and penetrating, so cosmic in its beauty and its glimpse of the supra-terrestrial. Elaborated in true Homeric style the comparing of the extinct star, still visible because of the years taken by light for reaching us, to Deiphobus as viewed by the gods and as viewed by men fills us not only with its own sublimity but also with a sense of the far stretch and clairvoyant depth of a time-transcending Consciousness beyond the human. Francis Thompson, in *Sister Songs* has an analogous astronomical figure to suggest the poet being survived by his poetry. A moving use this, yet not equal to Sri Aurobindo's in aura and overtone of imagination. What Sri Aurobindo conveys is a profounder meaning than Art's effective continuity in men's remembrance and in their lives after the artist's personal disappearance from the earth; some deathless Artist Power that has fashioned the whole universe is conjured up in its immense supremacy. And how inevitably the spacious speed of the hexameter rolls into our mind all the suggestions! Every help the peculiarity and uniqueness of the medium can give is taken. The line, for instance, in which the simile is stated would not be so impressive and expressive if it were not a running on and on for seventeen syllables and if it did not scan with a most felicitous variety:

Even as a star long extinguished whose light still travels the spaces.

What is called the first paeon (- ~ ~ ~) is the opening foot; its initial long pushes upon us through three consecutive short syllables a suggestion of nullity and vacuity which the next few words bear out. The second foot, an anti-bacchius, provides metrically the magnitude and length needed by the meaning and leads significantly by its last unobtrusive syllable to the idea of effacement and extinction. The third foot is a cretic in quantity: a dactyl would have emphasised simply the effacement and extinction, without preparing the next idea which qualifies this—the idea of the light still living on in spite of its

source being dead and obscured: the long "whose" does that preparation. Then comes a spondee in which the living prolongation of that light is caught by the two stress-weighted lengths. The next dactyl echoes the plunge of light through the unresisting ether, while the last trochee has the subtle onomatopoeia of indefinite wideness. Of course it is not the mere metrical pattern that works upon our aesthetic perception: the word-rhythm has a creative quality of its own and there is an effective harmony of vowels and consonants, but without the structure provided by this precise manipulation of the metre they would not embody so perfectly the poetic stuff of the line. And it is worth noting that none of the departures from the base mars the typical hexameter flow: every foot starts with the impulsion of a distinct long and all of them combined keep time with the lines before and after.

It would be purblind to inveigh on a theoretical score against taking liberties with the mould handed down from Greece and Rome. *Ilion* seems to present once for all the authentically inspired model in English of that august measure. A Homerophile like H. B. Cotterill might deem his own translation of the *Odyssey* a truer equivalent. But the equivalence goes a very little way in reality. The unstressed long syllable which Professor Gilbert Murray considers one of the characteristics of the ancient hexameter does not get its entire value realised in a strict accentual system. Also, the demand innate to English poetry for diverse modulation is ignored. Hence Cotterill's work which is perhaps the most gigantic undertaken in the accentual hexameter remains thin and monotonous, in spite of a lively use of pause and enjambement. Something of Homer's impetuous nobility is conveyed in brief moments of brilliant inspiration; at other moments something of Homer's structure imparts the music of his movement even though the Olympian speech be lacking. But the majority of the verse has missed the soul of Homer's language as well as rhythm. And the fault is not confined merely to an imperfect base; it extends to the very quality of the mind by which the base is used. Numberless lines of Sri Aurobindo's can be scanned on purely the accentual count and they are just as 'noble' as those that need a quantitative scansion. A line with no unconventional modulation is not bound to be tame or blunt or heavy. If Cotterill had been more of a poet he would not have taken Homer's majestically natural

Zēnos men pais ēa Kronīonos autar oixūn
Eikhon apeiresien,

and knocked half of the world-cry out of it by a somewhat pompous and ill-balanced turn at the end :

Son of Cronion, of Zeus the Almighty was I—but afflictions
Ever-unending I knew.

Surely it was nothing save defect of the poetic afflatus that could not strike upon a more moving approximation like

Son of Kronion, of Zeus the Supreme was I, yet have I suffered
Infinite pain.

Sri Aurobindo's sovereign mark is his unfailing inspiration. Unconventionally modulated or no, his lines have the conquering nobility of Homer's hexameter. It is, for instance, hard to imagine any one except the Bard of Scio in the tone of Deiphobus's query to Talthybius, beginning with

"Messenger, voice of Achaia, wherefore confronting the daybreak
Comest thou driving thy car from the sleep of the tents that besiege us"?

and closing with the equally elevated, the equally rhythmical and at the same time simple and direct

"What in the dawning bringst thou to Troya the mighty and dateless
Now in the ending of Time, when the gods are weary of struggle?
Sends Agamemnon challenge or courtesy, Greek, to the Trojans?"

Even more Homeric is the reply of Talthybius :

High like the northwind answered the voice of the doom from Achaia :
" Trojan Deiphobus, daybreak, silence of night and the evening
Sink and arise and even the strong sun rests from his splendour."

* The sign (—) has been used here to show certain long vowel values which might be lost in the English transliteration.

Not for the servant is rest nor Time is his, only his death-pyre.
I have not come from the monarch of men or the armoured assembly
Held on the wind-swept marge of the thunder and laughter of ocean.
I am a voice out of Phthia, I am the will of the Hellene.

Peace in my right I bring to you, death in my left hand. Trojan,
Proudly receive them, honour the gifts of the mighty Achilles.
Death accept if Atë deceives you and Doom is your lover,
Peace if your fate can turn and the god in you chooses to hearken."

Here at least the substance is charged with momentousness, but see how even the most common stuff of thought is transfigured and woven without any seam into the general poetic texture. What can be less abnormal in idea and language than the envoy's

" Full is my heart and my lips are impatient with speech undelivered "
or Deiphobus's

" Vain is the offer of peace that sets out with a threat for its prelude "

and yet the same lifting musical breath is in them as at its strongest renders Olympian the words with which Thrasymachus greets Aeneas with the news that Deiphobus has sent him :

"Hero Aeneas, swift be thy stride to the Ilian hill-top.

Dardanid, haste ! for the gods are at work ; they have risen with the
morning,

Each from his starry couch, and they labour. Doom, we can see it,
Glows on their anvils of destiny, clang we can hear of their hammers.
Something they forge there, sitting unknown in the silence eternal
Whether of evil or good it is they who shall choose who are masters
Calm, unopposed; they are gods and they work out their iron caprices,
Troy is their stage and Argos their background; we are their puppets.
Always our voices are prompted to speech for an end that we know not,
Always we think that we drive, but are driven, Action and impulse,
Yearning and thought are their engines, our will is their shadow
and helper.

Now too, deeming he comes with a purpose framed by a mortal,

Shaft of their will they have shot from the bow of the Grecian leaguer,
Lashing themselves at his steeds, Talthybius sent by Achilles."

It would be interesting to analyse the masterly technique turning each line unlike any other and binding all into a single swaying music. But what would mere technique of construction be if the creative fire were not behind it? What catches us immediately in Sri Aurobindo's *Ilion* is the burning breath. We would not even feel the dexterous swing of the lines and their unwearying variety if we did not primarily stir to the *élan vital* that glorifies the metrical medium. Artistic devices are dead things by themselves, the finest words can become garish inanities. Neither structural skill nor choice locution is the stuff of poetry: that stuff is drawn from the inner heart and the inner eye. To adapt the figures of a line already cited from Sri Aurobindo, those are but the face and feet of the poetic moment and all can see them, while the invisible burden which it carries and which alone confers meaning as well as magic on them are these inner forces of creation. These give the glowing pulse to what would otherwise be just an ingenious machine. All that Sri Aurobindo expounds in his theory of the hexameter would be wasted unless the poetic soul of the ancient measure be gripped from within. Homer and Virgil must incarnate in us before we can write like them. Command of words and manipulation of pauses cannot suffice to supply the complex concentrated energy that tells us how dire were the eyes of Talthybius on the beauty of Troy:

All Greece gazed in them, hated, admired, grew afraid, grew relentless
or the felicitous glamour that calls Paris

Ever a child of the dawn at play near a turn of the sun-roads,
Facing destiny's look with the careless laugh of a comrade.

Sri Aurobindo has succeeded in making his conception of true English quantity and his vision of the hexameter a force for the future because he has built them out of deep oneness with the spirit of poetry both classical and English. No "brilliant husk" empty of the daemon, like the body of Deiphobus when the gods withdrew from him, is here. Sri Aurobindo has taken up the hexameter with a consciousness unfettered by the labourer brain, a conscious-

ness whole-heartedly given in all its intricate potency to his sense of secret superhuman rulers of art no less than life. Without contacting their unknown depths, and feeling that

Silent they toil, they are hid in the clouds, they are wrapped with the
midnight,

the poet, especially one who seeks to revive a medium steeped in antiquity's "high seriousness" and instinct of the deific, will always find it difficult to sustain in his speech the fire and the light that waken to rapture, our "infinite pain".

K. D. SETHNA

The Philosopher as an Artist



I wonder why Philosophy has never been considered as a variety of Art. Philosophy is admired for the depth and height of its substance, for its endeavour to discover the ultimate Truth, for its one-pointed adherence to the supremely Real ; but precisely because it does so it is set in opposition to Art which is reputed as the domain of the ideal, the imaginative or the fictitious. Indeed it is the antagonism between the two that has always been emphasised and upheld as an axiomatic truth and indisputable fact. Of course old Milton (he was young, however, when he wrote these lines) says that philosophy is divine and charming,

Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo's lute—

Well, I am not sure if the poet was here anything more than metaphorically rhapsodical, or at the most had only a poetic perception; he did not give us the scientific truth of the matter.

In the face of established opinion and tradition (and in the wake of the prophetic poet) I propose to demonstrate that Philosophy has as much claim to be called an art, as any other orthodox genre, painting or sculpture or music or architectnre. I do not refer to the element of philosophy—perhaps the very large element of philosophy—that is embedded and ingrained in every Art; I speak of Philosophy by itself as a distinct type of authentic art. I mean Philosophy is composed or created in the same way as any other art and the philosopher is moved and driven by the inspiration and impulsion of a genuine artist. Now, what is Art? Please do not be perturbed by the question, I am not trying to enter into the philosophy—the metaphysics—of it, but only into the science—the physics—of it. Whatever else it may be, the *sine qua non*, the minimum requisite of Art, is that it must be a thing of beauty, that is to say, it must possess a beautiful form. Even the Vedic Rishi says that the poet by his poetic power created a heavenly form—*kaviḥ kavitva divirupam asajat*.

As a matter of fact, a supreme beauty of form has often been marked as the very apex of artistic creation. Now, what does the Philosopher do? The sculptor hews beautiful forms out of marble, the poet fashions beautiful forms out of words, the musician shapes beautiful forms out of sounds. And the philosopher? The Philosopher, I submit, builds beautiful forms out of thoughts and concepts. Thoughts and concepts are the raw material out of which the artist philosopher creates mosaics and patterns and designs and architectonic edifices. For what else are philosophical systems? A system means, above all, a form of beauty, symmetrical and harmonious, a unified whole, rounded and polished and firmly holding together. Even as in Art, in philosophy too truth, bare sheer truth is not the object of the enquiry, or the one thing needful for the presentation. Has it not been considered sufficient for a truth to be philosophically true, if it is consistent, if it does not involve self-contradiction? The equation runs: Truth=Self-consistency, Error=Self-contradiction. To discover the absolute Truth is not the philosopher's task—it is an ambitious enterprise as futile and as much of a *maya* as the pursuit of absolute space, absolute time or absolute motion in Science. Philosophy has nothing more to do - and nothing less - than to evolve or build up a system, in other words, a self-consistent whole (of concepts, in this case). Art also does exactly the same thing. Self-contradiction means at bottom want of harmony, balance, symmetry, unity, and self-consistency means the contrary of these things — the two terms used by philosophy are only the logical formulation of an essentially aesthetic value.

Take, for example, the philosophical system of Kant or of Hegel or of our own Shankara. What a beautiful edifice of thought each one has reared! How cogent and compact, organised and poised and finely modelled! Shankara's reminads me of a tower, strong and slender, mounting straight and tapering into a vanishing point among the clouds; it has the characteristic linear movement of Indian melody. On the other hand, the march of the Kantian Critiques or of the Hegelian Dialectic has a broader base and involves a composite strain, a balancing of contraries, a blending of diverse notes: there is something here of the amplitude and comprehensiveness of harmonic architecture (without perhaps a corresponding degree of altitude).

All these systems, commonly called philosophical, appear to me supremely artistic. The logical intellect has worked here exactly like a chisel

or a brush in the hand of the artist. It did not care for truth *per se*, its prime preoccupation was arrangement, disposition: the problem it set before itself was how best to present a consistent and unified, that is to say, a beautiful whole.

But the philosopher's stone is not, after all, altogether a myth, as it is being proved by modern science. So too, the philosopher's truth—the truth, that is to say, in the noumenal sense, to which he aspires in his heart of hearts—is also existent. There is a reality apart from and beyond all relativities and contingencies: truth is not mere self-consistence, it is self-existence. Art and artistic philosophy may not comprehend it, but they circuit round it and even have glimpses of it and touch it, though the vision they have more often aberrates, distorting a rope into a snake.

It is a grain of this truth that is the substance and the core of all true art and philosophy. Philosophy works upon this secret strand by its logic, art by imagination—although logic and imagination may not be so incommensurable as they are commonly thought to be; even so, both art and philosophy arrive at the same result, viz., the building of a beautiful superstructure.

This golden core of truth comes from elsewhere—it is beyond the the mayic circle of art and philosophy. To have access to it, a lid overhead is to be broken through—rather, as it is said, it is that that breaks through of its own accord and reveals its identity.

Plato would not tolerate the poets in his ideal society, since they care too much for beauty and very little for the true and the good. He wanted it all to be a kingdom of philosophers. I am afraid, Plato's philosopher is not true to type, the type set up by his great disciple Aristotle. Plato's philosopher is no longer an artist, he has become a mystic—a Rishi, in our language.

For we must remember that Plato himself was more of a poet than a philosopher. Very few among the great representative souls of humanity surpassed him in the true poetic afflatus. The poet and the mystic—Kavi and Rishi—are the same in our ancient lore. However, these two, Plato and Aristotle, the, mystic and the philosopher, the master and the

disciple, combine to form one of those dual personalities which Nature seems to like and throws up from time to time in her evolutionary march, — not as a mere study in contrast, a token of her dialectical process, but rather as a movement of polarity making for greater comprehensiveness and richer values. They may be taken as the symbol of a great synthesis that humanity needs and is preparing. The role of the mystic is to envisage and unveil the truth, the supernal reality which the mind cannot grasp nor all the critical apparatus of human reason demonstrate and to bring it down and present it to the understanding and apprehending consciousness. The philosopher comes in at this stage: he receives and gathers all that is given to him, arranges, and systematises, puts the whole thing in a frame as it were, holds it up before our normal intelligence.

The poet-philosopher or the philosopher-poet, whichever way we may put it, is a new formation of the human consciousness that is coming upon us. A wide and rationalising (not rationalistic) intelligence deploying and marshalling out a deep intuitive and direct Knowledge—that is the pattern of human mind developing in the new age. Bergson's was a harbinger, a definite land-mark on the way. Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* arrives and opens the very portals of the marvellous temple city of integral knowledge.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

DISTICHS

(From the author's original French verses)

“Run to me, my darling, run ! Let me carry thee home.” Thus the Lord prays to the frail human soul.

I am athirst of gold and blue and all that is iridescent. The earth is a black hole, the body a nightmare.

The flesh betrays and the soul weeps ! But these tears seep into the flesh and turn it to fire and flower.

Away from these banks where everything wounds and nothing consoles, where they curse their soul and break their idol.

“Whither goest thou, traveller ?” “Wheresoever thou leadest me, O Wonder Flame. Home of the moth”.

What thou givest to the Divine, that remains and waxes, all else passes and wanes and vanishes.

Live like a warrior, ever more dangerously : give thyself up body and soul, ready unto eternity.

Come to Me, unhappy, mortal ; I shall cleanse thee of all misery and mortality.

May I leap into Thee, my sole shelter, even like a dart that shoots straight to its mark !

Thy loving fingers wipe away at every step the stain it leaves : and
my path gleams with Thy Grace.

Healer ! heal us of our griefs of yester-year, even as a winter world
is healed by the breath of Spring.

Thy smile moves our tears and our laughter too. It is Venus that
shines now at morn, and not at eve.

A miracle is moulding earth and heaven ! Gods are becoming men
and men becoming gods.

I come from afar, from elsewhere. I am the New Born, the light that
saves an old world all but lost.

Christmas Eve ! It snows, it blows freezing blast without. Within my
soul, oh, the warmth that two little feet radiate !

The straw belongs to the Wind and to Death its victim. I am my
Lord's and He gives me all my destiny as it pleases Him.

To know the Divine, that is commonsense. To know the Divine is to
know how best to live.

One must enter heaven lone and naked, even as one came into this
world of dirt and grief.

Every evening the old agonising day spills out its blood and life—for
the coming Dawn must be nourished,

High, ever nearer ! Let the being master the great science of living
in God.

To see the gods one must become blind for good and to speak their
tongue one must become dead dumb.

x **x** **x**

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Sri Aurobindo's Life & Thought *

I

It is a pleasure, as it is also a great privilege, to participate in the inauguration of the "Sri Aurobindo Circle", organized by the admirers of Sri Aurobindo in Bombay. I am reminded now of what a Chinese scholar, Professor Tan Yun-Shan of the Visva-Bharati, said when he visited Sri Aurobindo's Yogasram some time ago. Though his visit was brief it was purposive, and he saw at once that "the Asram overflows in its peace which pervades the whole town of Pondicherry"; he therefore remarked, seemingly paradoxically, "that the Asram was not in Pondicherry but Pondicherry was in the Asram." The organization of the "Sri Aurobindo Circle" in Bombay makes me likewise feel that Bombay itself is now in the Asram. Perhaps, the day is not far off when the whole world also will be in the Asram at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo has an urgent and vital message for the West no less than for the East; and it is indeed a happy augury that more and more people are hearkening to the Voice from Pondicherry.

I must however confess at the outset that I do not feel at all competent to give an authoritative account of Sri Aurobindo's Life and Thought. My interest in Sri Aurobindo is not more than a year old. When I was engaged last year on a study of the Indian Contribution to English Literature, I happened to read — and re-read — the two volumes of Sri Aurobindo's *Collected Poems and Plays*, published to commemorate his seventieth birthday. They were a revelation to me, and I wished to read more of him and to know more about him. I read *The Mother*, and was immediately overwhelmed by its spiritual fervour and its seductive prose rhythms, presently I read other books (which a kind friend gave me, one after another) and I lingered in the company of *Bases of Yoga*, *Heraclitus* and *Thoughts and Glimpses* — and, in

* The Address delivered at the time of the Inauguration of the "Sri Aurobindo Circle" in Bombay on the 24th November 1948 under the presidency of Sir Chunilal V. Mehta.

due course, taking courage in both hands, I ventured into the immensities of *Essays on the Gita*, *The Future Poetry* and *The Life Divine*. One thing inevitably led to another, my preoccupation with Sri Aurobindo increased as the weeks and months passed, I paid a visit or two to Pondicherry, and I attempted, first an essay on the Poetry of Sri Aurobindo, and later other essays on different aspects of his Life and Work.

All this nevertheless is insignificant. Sri Aurobindo is immense—he contains multitudes — and he eludes the crude grasp of the mere mind. His real life—his spiritual life has not been lived on the outside for the mere eye to see and record ; his thought — the essence of it — is charged with a unique potency and significance that the mere mind tries vainly to comprehend. But alas ! men are we, and we can only see life from the outside — we can but snap its accretions — and we have only limited, self-divided, blundering mind to judge things by. With reluctance and diffidence, then, I now proceed to tell the story of Sri Aurobindo's life and to indicate his inspiring Vision of Humanity's Future.

II

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. His father, Krishnadhan Ghose, was a popular Civil Surgeon of his day, while his mother, Swarnalata Devi was a daughter of Rishi Rajnarayan Bose, one of the great figures of the Bengali renaissance. Aurobindo had his early schooling, along with his brothers Manamohan and Benoybushan, at the Darjeeling Loretto Convent School. All three were taken to England in 1879, and Aurobindo spent his next fourteen years in England. He was first privately educated by Mr. and Mrs. Drewett at Manchester. In 1885, when the Drewetts left England, Aurobindo joined the St. Paul's School in London and five years later he went to Cambridge with a Senior Classical Scholarship to King's College. Although he passed the Indian Civil Service open competitive examination, the service did not really attract him and he absented himself from the Riding Test and thereby escaped that unwelcome bondage. In the meantime he had acquired a very considerable proficiency, not only in English but also in French, Greek, Latin, and even German and Italian. He passed the Classical Tripos also in the first division although he did not actually apply for the degree; instead, he left England in February 1893, having secured an appointment in the service of the Maharaja of Baroda.

Sri Aurobindo passed the next thirteen years in Baroda. He was employed in various offices, but finally he oscillated towards the Baroda College. He taught French for a time and then became Professor of English and finally Vice-Principal. During these years Sri Aurobindo achieved the feat of re-nationalizing himself. He mastered Sanskrit and Bengali and acquired an easy familiarity with one or two other Indian languages as well. He surveyed the Indian political scene soon after his return to India—and the prospect depressed him. He wrote a series of challenging articles, which appeared anonymously in the columns of the *Indu Prakash* under the telling caption, 'New Lamps for Old'. But the time was inopportune for political action, and Sri Aurobindo withdrew into silence. But his pen was not idle. "New Lamps for Old" was followed by a series of articles on the art of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Sri Aurobindo wrote in this period a number of original poems also, besides translating Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie* into English verse. *Songs to Myrtilla and Other Poems*, which included many pieces written in England, appeared in 1895; *Urvasie*, a blank verse narrative poem in four Cantos, appeared next year; and some of the metrical renderings from Bhartrihari's *Niti-Shataka* appeared in the *Baroda College Magazine*. Another long narrative poem *Love and Death*, a five-act blank verse tragedy, *Perseus the Deliverer*, and number of lyrics also were written in Baroda, but they were, however, published much later.

Even his earliest poems may be said to have the authentic Aurobindonian touch. His metrical craftsmanship is flawless and his eye ever rolls with a frenzy of earnestness, glancing from Heaven to Earth, from Earth to Heaven. The problem of human conduct is posed again and again. The citadel of Reality is bombarded from without—and anon seized by direct vision.

And as the imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

Thus the epyllions, *Urvasie* and *Love and Death*, and the play, *Perseus the Deliverer* are the testaments of a seer even more than the tapestries of a word-painter.

To the outside world, Sri Aurobindo was only a professor and a poet; but in the profoundest obscurities of his being there were deeper insistent stirrings. The disciplines of Yoga fascinated him—and Mother India's travail gave him no quiet. He worked as yet behind the scenes, but his work was important; it was a necessary seed-time to the harvest that was to follow.

III

A clue to the working of Sri Aurobindo's mind during this crucial period of transition is furnished by a letter that he wrote to his wife from Baroda. This and two subsequent letters were seized by the police and produced later in court—which is the reason why they have been preserved for posterity! In the first letter, Sri Aurobindo begins by saying that his wife, Srimati Mrinalini Devi, has married an uncommon person; the world might very well call him a madman! But if a madman realizes his frenzied ambitions, the same world would hasten to proclaim his greatness. Sri Aurobindo's mighty frenzies (he continues) are three in number. In the first place, his money, his property, is *his* only on trust; he ought to spend but a bare minimum on his personal needs, and the rest should be devoted to good works, *dharmakarya*. In the second place, he is convinced that God too can be *seen*—and he, Sri Aurobindo, is determined to confront Him *tete-à-tete*. And, in the last place, to Sri Aurobindo India is the Mother—truly and literally the Mother—and he would strain his uttermost to release her from bondage; and he would strive to achieve his ambition, not through violence or *Kshatra-tej*, but through soul-force or *brahma-tej*. These are his frenzies, and he cannot escape them; is his wife going to be his Shakti—his reservoir of strength—and help him to reach the goal? She might, even if she cannot march alongside of him, at least follow his lead and march behind him; and both will then reach the Sanctuary of Fulfilment in the fulness of time!

Meanwhile the "Partition of Bengal" administered a rude shock to complacency, and India generally, and Bengal particularly, leapt into nationalistic fervour and stern revolutionary endeavour. Sri Aurobindo left the Baroda service for good and went to Calcutta as Principal of the new Bengal National College. He induced the Nationalist party to adopt Complete Independence as their ideal and helped them to formulate a militant nationalist programme

as against the "mendicant" policy of the Moderates. Sri Aurobindo was now also the *de facto* editor of the *Bandemataram*, the spearhead of the Nationalist movement. His editorials were bold, audacious, trumpet-tongued; they set the pace of the Nationalist movement; the watchwords of the movement.—self-help, non-co-operation, swadeshi, arbitration courts, national education, passive resistance—acquired a general currency, thanks to Sri Aurobindo's stewardship of the *Bandemataram* and of the movement itself.

As yet, however, Sri Aurobindo was known only to a narrow circle of nationalist workers. Indeed, the *Bandemataram* editorials were attributed—so clever and "crammed with sedition" were they!—to Bepin Chandra Pal. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo never urged his case for Indian Independence by detailing charges of misgovernment; his thesis was simple—even good government was no substitute for self-government, and India had an inherent right to govern herself! Government, on the contrary, took fright and prosecuted Sri Aurobindo for publishing a certain article from a correspondent and also for re-printing certain articles that the prosecution were using in another case. There was no shred of evidence that Sri Aurobindo was the *de jure* editor of the *Bandemataram*, and hence he was acquitted. This event and the incarceration of other leaders compelled Sri Aurobindo to come forward as the undisputed head of the Bengal Nationalists.

IV

All this was not quite to his liking and Sri Aurobindo was now and then distracted by the attempts of people to pull him in various directions and also by heavy work in connection with the *Bandemataram* and the Nationalist party. He proceeded to Surat in December 1907 and presided over the Nationalist Conference. After the abortive Surat Congress, Sri Aurobindo re-visited Baroda, and his old friends and former pupils gave him a royal welcome. It was now Sri Aurobindo came in contact with Yogi Lele, who advised him to empty his mind of all conflicting stuff and create a *sunya* instead. Sri Aurobindo took the hint and soon succeeded in creating the ineffable condition of silence of the mind, all seeming thought and action going on merely on the surface. For the rest, Yogi Lele advised Sri Aurobindo to hearken to the Voice within—and It would lead him.

Sri Aurobindo's perplexities were at an end. Early in 1908, he wrote in the course of a letter to his wife that he was in God's hands; he would go whithersoever He might lead him. He visited Bombay, Poona, Nasik, and various other places on his return journey to Calcutta. Back in Calcutta, Sri Aurobindo threw himself into work—and all work was Yoga to him. Unfortunately, he was arrested again in May in connection with the Muzzaferpore bomb outrage and the miniature bomb factory at Manicktolla. He was taken to Alipur, and lodged for a time in a solitary cell. He quickly overcame his initial shock—shock that he should have been arrested on a charge of association with the terrorist movement—and equanimity returned to him, and he waited in silence to see the unfoldment of His purposes. He read the *Gita*, and lived its *sadhana*; and one day he opened his eyes—and saw! The indwelling God was manifest to him everywhere and in everybody. The iron bars of the cell, the branches and leaves of the tree, the bed and the rough mattress, the prisoners and the jailors, the pleaders and the witnesses, Mr. Eardley Norton and Chittaranjan Das and Mr. Beachcroft the Magistrate, all were none other than Narayana, it was Vasudeva that gave them names and formal habitations!

Sri Aurobindo was acquitted a second time; as no iota of evidence could be established against him; and, after a whole year's detention in jail, he came out without a stain on his character in May 1909. A dismal prospect greeted his return to freedom: the Nationalist party was broken, its leaders were in jail or were far away, and the Lokamanya was languishing in Mandalay. For about seven or eight months, Sri Aurobindo strove hard to keep the Nationalist flag flying—though with a difference. He edited a weekly paper in English, *The Karmayogin*, and a weekly Bengali journal, *Dharma*, and these carried his ripe message of Karmayoga to the remotest nooks of this sub-continent. But gradually he came to realize that he was destined to do other and more important work than political action. He had a distinct *adesh* in the matter, and he decided to retire from the political field—at least for a time. He therefore left Calcutta in February 1910 and remained in secret retirement for a couple of months in Chandernagore; in the beginning of April, he sailed for Pondicherry, and since then he has remained there and cut off his connection with politics entirely. The lure of the Presidency of the

Indian National Congress and other similar inducements and attempts at personal persuasion by eminent patriots like Lala Lajpat Rai and Chittaranjan Das have all proved unavailing. The poet and humanist of the Baroda period gave place to the patriot and prophet and Nationalist evangel of the Calcutta period; and he too gave place at the appointed time to the philosopher and Yogi and pilgrim of Eternity of the Poddicherry period.

Sri Aurobindo's first four years in Pondicherry were a period of "silent Yoga". In the words of the Mother: "Whatever has been done in the world has been done by the very few who can stand aside from the action in silence; for it is they who are the instruments of the Divine Power.....In peace, in silence, and in quietness the world was built; and each time that something is to be truly built it is in peace and silence and quietness that it must be done". And Aurobindo rested for a while in an Inn of Tranquillity—

A thin-walled ivory tower,
Built light but strong by fairy hands
With thought's creative power.

Omnipresent Reality was no more a closed book to him—he glimpsed it, he measured its heights and depths, he marked its currents and shades and undulations—and having been "there" he returned yet to the world of inarticulate words and paralyzed forces. In collaboration with M. Richards and she who is known today as the Mother, Sri Aurobindo now began the publication of a monthly philosophical review, the *Arya*, and continued to publish it for about six years and a half.

Most of the contributions in the *Arya* were from Sri Aurobindo's pen. There were, firstly, the major sequences. *The Life Divine*, *The Secret of the Veda*, *Essays on the Gita*, *A Defence of Indian Culture*, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Future Poetry*, *The Psychology of Social Development* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Massive thought-structures all, at once weighty and luminous, integral in their vision and refreshing in their appeal. The mystic, the Pilgrim of Eternity, has seen, he has touched the sanctuary of Realization and marked the many clear milestones on the way. The philosopher now supplies the intellectual background while the teacher takes the disciple by the hand and shows him the steep, narrow way leading to the Heights and warns him of the

mirages, the mines and the tiger-throated gorges that ever daunt and defy the questing pilgrim.

In addition to the major sequences, the *Arya* published also weighty assessments like *Heracitus* and many stray reviews and articles and many more gem-like thoughts and meritorious verse translations, all from Sri Aurobindo's pen. Yoga is indeed "skill in works", and Sri Aurobindo's Yogic fire shot out tongues of flame in many directions, dispelling the shades of half-knowledge and illuminating the table-lands of Truth.

After the *Arya* ceased to appear, some of Sri Aurobindo's contributions to it were collected and issued in book form. *Essays on the Gita* first appeared in two volumes in 1922 and is now in its fourth edition; *The Life Divine* appeared in a revised and enlarged version in 1939, in three Parts extending in all to over 1600 pages, and the book is in its second edition. *The Renaissance in India* is a small book of four chapters, but it uncannily divines the currents of renascent India and boldly projects the configuration of the future. The Pondicherry period has also seen the publication in book form of *Ahana and Other Poems*, *Baji Prabhou*, *Songs of the Sea* and various collections of letters and poems. It is nevertheless safe to remark that in prose no less than in verse only a fraction of what Sri Aurobindo has actually written has so far been published in handy volume form—or published at all.

In recent years, an Asram has grown round Sri Aurobindo as its centre, consisting of a community of sadhakas who are eager and willing to follow the spiritual guidance of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Today there are more than 300 sadhakas in the Asram and the Asram is in very truth "the centre of a new life".

VI

I have left myself little time to discuss Sri Aurobindo's poetry and criticism, his philosophy and Yoga and his constructive contributions to history and sociology. Although one can artificially discuss these divers facets of his achievement separately, they are in fact intimately implicated in one another and constitute an integrated sum of giant realization. The Seer has

fronted Infinity and Felicity—the Poet has hymned his “gloried fields of trance”—the Philosopher has sought to interpret the Vision in terms of reason—the Yogi has formulated a method of achieving the desired change in Consciousness—the Sociologist has thrown out significant hints in regard to the organization of Tomorrow's World—and the creative critic has sensed the rhythms of Tomorrow's Poetry when, granted the other changes, the new poet also will ride on the wings of an elemental spirituality and articulate the ineluctable hymns of the Spirit.

In brief, Sri Aurobindo's great aim—the *raison d'être* of his Purna Yoga—is a radical change in our consciousness. He confided his thoughts to the late C. R. Das in the course of a letter written in 1922: “..... I see more and more manifestly that man cannot get out of the futile cycle the race is always treading, until he has raised himself on to a new foundation.....How could our present instruments—intellect, life, mind, body—be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge and some mastery of the secret”. Human consciousness has first to be lifted out of its present obscuration and perversion—self-division—and, as light follows day, Pain and Desire and Incapacity will cease to be and our dream of the “Life Divine” will become a fruitful and lasting reality.

The metaphysical position briefly stated above has been argued out by Sri Aurobindo with marvellous force and subtlety in his great treatise, *The Life Divine*. The revelation writes itself out in vast spans of thought and stupendous streams of sound; and *The Life Divine*, albeit in appearance a Text-Book of Metaphysics, is seen in the end to be a mighty prose symphony. Sri Aurobindo chimes with the Evolutionists—but only up to a point. Life indeed came out of matter—and mind came out of life. But nothing can come out of nothing. If life came out of matter, it follows that life was already involved in matter; in like manner, mind being already involved in life and matter, was able to achieve release from them at the proper time and inform and energize them. Thus “Evolution” is conceived by Sri Aurobindo, not as a blind unpredictable cosmic up-surge, but rather as the reverse process of the involution of the Spirit in Matter; and evolution and involution have alike their base in the *lila* of the Supreme. In other words,

"World-existence is the ecstatic dance of Shiva which multiplies the body of the God numberlessly to the view; it leaves that white existence precisely where and what it was, ever is and ever will be; its sole absolute object is the joy of the dancing".

The experience of pain and defeat is a fairly universal phenomenon. "Sorrow is"; and Pain is the badge of our lives. It is open to us to affirm the Spirit, concur with the Ascetic's denial of the phenomenal world, and inflict upon the flesh numberless injuries of commission or omission; it is open to us no less to swear only by the earth and its material joys, and deny Heaven and its ecstatic thrills and its deathless truths. But Sri Aurobindo would deny neither Matter nor the Spirit, neither Earth nor Heaven. Matter too is Brahman and even Earth is kin-soil to Heaven. He would seize them both, transform Nature into Supernature, and realize in our midst a new Heaven and a new Earth!

VII

Sri Aurobindo has clearly shown that each evolutionary leap has been achieved as the result of a three-fold movement: an upward movement, a downward movement and an inward movement. The evolutionary attempt at self-exceeding is met by a corresponding involutionary descent of consciousness from above; and the two movements coalesce and stabilize the evolutionary spurt. In this manner two major changes in the earth-consciousness—from the inert material to the vital level and again from the vital to the mental level—have already been realized. Sri Aurobindo is firmly persuaded by mystic experiences that the mental level too in its turn, will be a mere stepping board for a further evolutionary leap. Man also will exceed himself and undergo the baptism of supermanhood and inherit an earthly immortality!

Sri Aurobindo categorically affirms that this supramental change is a thing "decreed and inevitable in the evolution of the earth-consciousness". Mind is but a half-way house between Matter's Inconscience and the Gnostic Being's crown of Supermind. A lid now separates the two hemispheres of Reality and sets all our concerns at sixes and sevens and writes out forces and tragedies and distracting ironies of circumstance. What is wanted is a "fixed and unfailing aspiration from below" and simultaneously, "a supreme grace"

from above that answers"; and the tranfiguring "grace" from above will surely descend and flood the uplands of human effort and "rend the lid and the covering and shape the vessel and bring down into this world of obscurity and falsehood and death and suffering Truth and Life divine and the immortal's Ananda" !

This is Sri Aurobindo's picture of Tomorrow's World. He firmly believes that the stage is set for the next large-scale evolutionary experiment. The time is not distant when corruption will put on incorruption, pain assume the colour of felicity, and death deny its nature and grow into immortality. Let us then cherish this priceless *mantra* of liberation, and this dream and this vision will sustain us in our trials, and we shall safely exceed the twist of our nature and lo !

Truth of man's thought with truth of God's spirit faultlessly timing,
That which was mortal shall enter immortality's golden precincts....
Deep in our lives there shall work out a honeyed celestial leaven,
Bliss shall grow native to being and earth be a kin-soil to heaven.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR, (M.A., D. Litt.)

The Eternal Detractors

The other day a thoughtful friend of mine (whose rapid conversion to mysticism has always rather thrilled me, for he had been a confirmed agnostic all his life) was discussing a Professor of philosophy in a mofussil college. "He's a nice fellow," said my friend ruefully, "but the pity of it is that he has a heart of stone against Sri Aurobindo."

"What was the cause of the petrification?"

"Nobody knows. All one knows is that he boasts in grim earnest, in season and out of season, that he cannot understand a word of Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*.

"And he is a Lecturer in Philosophy!"

"A professor, if you please!"

And we laughed : or, to be more accurate, I laughed and he smiled. But I feel a malaise. Probably because, in the context of Indian philosophy one of us should have wept while the other sobbed !

Mark my words—"in the context of Indian philosophy." For the tragedy is at its inkiest there. For an Indian philosopher to be so uncomprehending when I have known quite green youths capable of comprehending much more than a word in Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine*!—to say nothing of utter foreigners writing in a little island beyond the seven seas in the thick of bursting bombs :

"He is not an arm-chair philosopher, but a man who, having led a life of intense activity, has retired to brood over it, if one may say so of a Hindu, in the dim light of a Gothic cathedral. In fact, he is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge.....Aurobindo cannot be dismissed as one who happens to have written a few fine books. He is a Yogi (a completely free Spirit) who writes as though he were standing among the stars." And add to this reverent

praise the writer's surprising tribute to Sri Aurobindo's *Life Divine* (surprising because the critic is a foreigner, a modern Englishman, who is seldom prone by nature to oriental mysticism*): "The importance of the book lies neither in its beauty of tone nor in its beauty of inspiration—both of which are there—but in its power of creating round us wide circles of peace."

But alas, what is sauce for the gander is not *always* sauce for the goose. So what has given to the intellectual materialist Westerner a caress of peace waves has given to so many spiritual sons of India anything but peace! so much so that they *have* to say, in season and out, how they simply cannot understand "a word" of Sri Aurobindo's mystical writings!

You will surely guess why I labour this point: not because I have anything against such peaceless people, personally, but only because we hear a little too often from the lips of vain ignorance that Sri Aurobindo's disquisitions are mere wordy clouds unilluminated by a sun of reality. There are others who assert that he is too hazy to be effective. Such asseverations and insinuations sound all the more amazing because Sri Aurobindo's language has just this outstanding merit of crystalline clarity even when the nuclear thought is profound and even intricate, (not for nothing has the learned Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* called his prose "luminous"). To prove this, let me resort to an old play: to open a book with a mental question and find the answer. I open the first volume of "*The Life Divine*" and lo, what do I find! (p. 6)—

"Attempts are sometimes made to have done finally with questionings which have so often been declared insoluble by logical thought and to persuade men to limit their mental activities to the practical and immediate problems of their material existence in the universe, but such evasions are never permanent in their effect. Mankind returns from them with a more vehement impulse of inquiry or a more violent hunger for an immediate solution. By that hunger mysticism profits and new religions arise to replace the old that have been destroyed or stripped of significance by a scepticism which itself could not satisfy because, *although its business was enquiry it was unwilling sufficiently to enquire*".

*D. L. Murray, Editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* wrote to me a few months ago that he was going to publish an 'important' article on Sri Aurobindo. The citations are given from this article published subsequently on July 8th 1944.

THE ETERNAL DETRACTORS

The italics are mine, intended for the "nice Professor". But to reveal the reason why I resorted to this play. Here is a passage I have chosen at random. Now suppose I am the plaintiff charging the learned Professor with perjury when he solemnly repeats in the dock what he says so often in grim grandeur : that he cannot understand a word of what is written in "The Life Divine": Will the jury believe him when he will stick to it saying that the above quotation is all Greek to him ? But then he might plead that this sentence cropped up by sheer accident. So let me open at another page at random as before. I open the second volume this time and find myself confronted by (p.177):—

"There is no greater pleasure for man himself than a victory which is in its very principle a victory in power, a victory in creation over the impossibilities of creation, a delight in the conquest over an anguished toil and a hard ordeal of suffering. At the end of separation is the intense joy of union, the joy of a meeting with a self from which we were divided."

This thought of the Divine Light plunging into ever deepening strata of a medium recalcitrant to light (involution) in order to recapture new thrills of self-discovery (evolution) may be a little difficult to grasp for a Westerner uninitiated in our idea of *Lila* or Divine Play, but surely an Indian philosopher in a chair should be at home in this ancient idea. In *Bhagawat*, for example, is it not stressed again and again that even the high gods thirst to be born on earth to be the *lila-sahacharas* (playmates) of Krishna ? The different incarnations of Narayana (as fish, boar, tortoise etc.) for new manifestations of His divine glory (*mahima*) is too patent to Hindus to need reiteration. But even if a Westernised Professor forgets all Hindu tradition with its unique and profound mystical lore (presumably while memorising the verbose intellectuals of the West) may we remind him that Sri Aurobindo is here not merely undersigning an old mythological wisdom but reading the divine paradox in daily lessons of life ? To take a picturesque instance, a very common one in India : do we not often go to a foreign land to discover beyond the seas new beauties in our motherland whom we seem to know while there in a deeper light of love and adoration ? How well I remember what my father told me ! He had gone to England almost completely enamoured of Western culture,

But there, in England, he glowed with a new love for his homeland of glory and dream and wrote in a foreign tongue.

O my land ! can I cease to adore thee,
 Though to gloom and to misery hurled ?
 O dear Bharat ! my beautiful maiden,
 O sweet Ind ! once queen of the world !
 And though wrecked is thy pride and thy glory,
 Of it nothing remains but the name ;
 Yet a beauty and sunshine still lingers
 And gleams through the mist of thy shame. *

Here I must pause once more and repeat that I cannot possibly mean that Sri Aurobindo's thought is at every turn easy to follow. No great Seer or thinker can be fully understood by his contemporaries any more than the real value of a rare jewel can be assessed by all and sundry. There must gleam in every prophet's new contribution to the world of thought and culture an element of startling newness that cannot be appraised here and now by the man in the street. It sounds almost like a platitude. If, nevertheless, I have reiterated it, it is only because in this new age of democracy and deification of the common man, the proletariat, we are a little too apt to forget that no truly great contribution of a creative artist, thinker or Seer can be evaluated by us all without our taking the pains to cultivate a necessary understanding. And this I emphasise again only to prove that Sri Aurobindo's message is no more obscure than Vivekananda's was obscurantist. If still we make such absurd pronouncements it must be due to our unwillingness to take even the minimum pains to understand our prophets.

But even when all is said I do not feel that it would be rational to expect that Sri Aurobindo will be smiled on by all. There will be, at least for a long time to come, quite a large number of men who will echo the Professor and call him incomprehensible. And the deeper reason is this :

Truth often crystallizes more convincingly through shocks of opposition, questioning and even attempts at total suppression, especially when it is

* Quoted from The Lyrics of God published in London in 1886 by the poet Dwijendra Lal Roy when he was a youth of two and twenty.

a new Truth that is descending from above, a new Light born of a new Vision. Sri Aurobindo has a new message derived from his realisation of just such a dynamic Truth : but every dynamis sets in motion forces and vibrations which disturb the *status quo*, the established equilibrium. So Sri Aurobindo calling to the Soul in man rouses new earth-quakes of aspiration which demolish many of our cherished conceptions of social, ethical and national well-being. It is true that all great prophets and avatars did this more or less in the past and consequently incurred the enmity of the multitude. But there is this difference : Sri Aurobindo even when he has shown the deep limitations of Reason has utilised the language of Reason. So the champions of Reason have no sense of superiority left : the Rishi has bearded the lion in his own den. But in such cases the lion must roar. The intellectual opponents of the Spirit have therefore to exploit various wails to serve them when roaring fails them. Then, there is the eternal chafing of the mediocrity against one who transcends mediocrity through sheer genius. Consequently we often find his message (of the Supermind e. g.) deliberately misunderstood and even travestied as though his call had any fundamental kinship with Nietzsche's blatant cry to the latent forces of egotism ! There are many other reasons which cannot be entered into in the course of a brief survey. So I will (somewhat inconsistently) conclude on the key of a personal regret that he should be so much misinterpreted and opposed in an age which has a supreme need of his guidance. For his is the guidance of a profound Seer, the only Seer today who can lead the derelict soul from shipwreck back to its haven of divine harmony and glorious all-round evolution unhampered by suicidal waste of our hidden spiritual energies. But then it is an age of frenzied blindness when the highest values of the Spirit have to be derided even by "nice Professors" and smug Priests of the established order. These are roused to fury, inevitably, when they, instinctively, feel their dark security of barren intellectualism and Godless science shaken to its very foundations by a new outbreak of incredible Light. To translate from an apposite poem of Tagore's :

They have no eyes for the unhorizoned Vast,
Nor ears for a new flood's imperious call :
Irrevocably moored to a dead Past
And vaunting each on his dwarf pedestal.

THE ETERNAL DETRACTORS

They must endeavour, O Light, to quench thy Fire,
Because thy *dharma* is so downright, Friend!
The dozers, when awakened, seldom tire
To wage their ruthless war against thine end;
Ever the guardians of dark-coiled Sleep
Shall at thy startling advent rave or weep. *

DILIP KUMAR ROY

* This is not a literal translation but the burthen of a famous poem of Rabindranath
entitled "SABUJER ABHIJAN" in "BALAKA."

The Revolution in Science

(A LETTER)

The defect in what X writes about Science seems to be that he is insisting vehemently on the idea that Science is still materialistic or at least that scientists, Jeans and Eddington excepted, are still fundamentally materialists. This is not the fact. Most continental scientists have now renounced the idea that Science can explain the fundamentals of existence. They hold that Science is only concerned with process and not with fundamentals. They declare that it is not the business of Science nor is it within its means to decide anything about the great questions which concern philosophy and religion. This is the enormous change which the latest developments of Science have brought about. Science itself nowadays is neither materialistic nor idealistic. The rock on which materialism was built and which in the 19th Century seemed unshakable has now been shattered. Materialism has now become a philosophical speculation just like any other theory; it cannot claim to found itself on a sort of infallible Biblical authority, based on the facts and conclusions of Science. This change can be felt by one like myself who grew up in the hey-day of absolute rule of scientific materialism in the 19th Century. The way which had been almost entirely barred except by rebellion now lies wide open to spiritual truths, spiritual ideas, spiritual experiences. That is the real revolution. Mentalism is only a halfway house but mentalism and vitalism are now perfectly possible as hypotheses based on the facts of existence, scientific facts as well as any others. The facts of Science do not compel any one to take any particular philosophical direction. They are now neutral and can even be used on one side or another though most scientists do not consider such a use as admissible. Nobody here in the Asram ever said that the new discoveries of Physics supported the ideas of religion or churches; they merely contended that Science had lost its old materialistic dogmatism and moved away by a revolutionary change from its old moorings.

It is this change which I expected and prophesied in my poems in the first *Ahana* volume, "A Vision of Science" and "In the Moonlight".

SRI AUROBINDO.

The New World of Science*



Science itself is in its own way an occultism ; for it brings to light the formulas which Nature has hidden and it uses its knowledge to set free operations of her energies which she has not included in her ordinary operations and to organise and place at the service of man her occult powers and processes, a vast system of magic,—for there is and can be no other magic than the utilisation of secret truths of being, secret powers and processes of Nature¹.

And it is certainly the fact that the wider we extend and the surer we make our knowledge of the physical world, the wider and surer becomes our foundation for the higher knowledge, even for the highest, even for the Brahmaidya².

Sri Aurobindo.

Theoretical physics in its progress has been forced by recent experimental works to abandon the classical traditions and adopt, as its new background, methods and ideas fundamentally different from those of the old scheme. Physical reality of the classical science was characterised by the concepts of matter, force, space and time—that is, the reality was considered to be an association of two entities, matter and force (force being reciprocal action between material points), matter moving about and following certain laws of force, so that one could form a mental picture of the world in space and time. So physics was reduced to forces operating on material points existing in space and to the formulation of laws governing their changes in time. Naturally this led physics to a mechanistic view of things that dominated the scientific world for more than two centuries. Gradually a new physical entity, the field, entered the arena of physics as a consequence of the wave theory of light and electro-magnetic phenomena. But this did not affect the conception of space of classical physics which still remained a passive container of physi-

* This article is a study of the recent developments in physics as discussed in the book, "The Evolution of Physics", by Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld.

1. "The Life Divine", Vol. II., p. 546.

2. Ibid., Vol. I., p. 17.

cal happenings because physicists of the time could not think of attributing a condition or state to space itself. So they invented ether, on the model of tangible matter, filling up all space and serving as a medium for light and electromagnetic phenomena.

Now fields were imagined as local conditions of ether resembling elastic deformations of rigid bodies, forces at a distance operating through these fields. So laws had to be devised to connect ether with matter through these fields, but ether resisted all attempts of the physicists to make it conform to the mechanical laws; in other words, the mechanical theory of ether did not succeed, rather it gave rise to serious and impossible complications, all centering round the question of relative motion of ether and matter. So the fate of ether as ponderable matter was at stake.

Recent developments of science, particularly in the experimental field, have made it increasingly evident that the world scheme must be based on an altogether different plan. It is very significant that both the theories of relativity and quanta that place modern physics on this new plan were first propounded to explain certain experimental facts which bore on the nature of light or with which light was directly or indirectly concerned, facts that baffled classical physics. The wave-equations assumed a fixed ether but the physical laws were based on a Galilean inertial-frame. So there arose the possibility of measuring the velocity of an observer with reference to the fixed ether. The negative result of the famous Michelson-Morley experiment, scarcely rivalled for the skill, accuracy and ingenuity displayed, which failed to detect the velocity of the earth through the ether ocean or, in other words, which failed to discover any difference between the velocity of light in the direction of the motion of the earth and the velocity of light in the opposite direction as required by the conception of the ether, put physicists into a very awkward and perplexing position. The special or restricted theory of relativity, so called because of its being restricted to only uniform rectilinear motion, got over the difficulty with two simple assumptions, first, the velocity of light *in vacuo* is constant or is the same in all co-ordinate systems moving uniformly relative to each other and secondly, all laws of nature are the same in all co-ordinate systems moving uniformly relative to each other. So the theory of relativity completely explains the Michelson Morley experiment by accepting the result of the experiment as a definite

principle—the principle of the constancy of the velocity of light that is taken as the fundamental unit of measurement for all observers. But these assumptions cannot be reconciled with classical transformation and it is here that the relativity theory and classical physics begin first to differ radically. In classical mechanics a moving clock does not change its rhythm nor does a moving yard stick change its length and consequently the velocity of light, measured by clocks and yardsticks, cannot be constant for all moving co-ordinate systems. But if the velocity of light is constant, as assumed by the relativity theory, then moving clocks must change their rhythms and moving yardsticks must change their lengths, such changes being governed by strict laws. Thus the Newtonian conception of time underwent a radical change by the introduction of the principle that the rate at which time lapses varies in systems or media having different speeds, that is, the dimension of bodies and rates of clocks are functionally related to motion. Notions of absolute space and absolute time and therefore of absolute simultaneity are thus discarded. So long events were considered as happening in a space of three dimensions at an instant considered the same for all moving co-ordinate systems because time was regarded as absolute, but the discovery of the relativity of simultaneity makes time a dimension of space, that is, time becomes the fourth dimension of space as changeable as space dimensions, since not only space but time as well is changed by passing from one system to another. Space and time are no longer fundamentals independent of the rest of physics, and relative motion in the four dimensional continuum is reduced to rotation of the axes of reference. “Or else Time could be a dimension of Space necessary for the complete action of the Energy, but not understood by us as such because it is seen by our conscious subjectivity as something itself subjective, felt by our mind, not perceived by our senses, and therefore not recognised as a dimension of Space which has to us the appearance of a sense-created or sense-perceived objective extension”.¹ The special theory of relativity thus rules out the existence of forces operating at a distance and also asserts that mass is dependent of energy content—is really equivalent to it, and combines the two conservation laws of mass and energy into one, the conservation law of mass-energy. It should be remembered in this connection that Newton himself did not feel very comfortable with the conception of absolute space, nor was he at all satisfied with the idea of forces acting at a distance.

1. The Life Divine, II, p. 271

According to the general theory of relativity, which includes accelerated motions, the gravitational and accelerated motions are fully equivalent—one cannot be distinguished from the other, that is, the observed acceleration of a body left to itself may be interpreted as a gravitational or as an inertial effect. In other words, gravitational and inertial mass are identical and this identity is fundamental and not accidental as was supposed by classical mechanics. Gravitation is the fundamental problem of the general theory of relativity. The introduction of the co-ordinate systems, accelerated to each other or any other systems, conditioned by the identity of gravitational and inertial mass, brings new and perplexing difficulties because Euclidean geometry is found no longer applicable to the new space where gravitational fields are present. Non-Euclidean geometry comes to the rescue. The geometrical character of the four-dimensional continuum is defined by the local distribution of matter, that is, the presence of matter does not produce force but causes modifications of space. The gravitational field, non-Euclidean geometry, clocks with different rhythms are all very intimately related together. According to this theory there is no absolute motion—even accelerated motion is regarded as relative motion,—relative in the sense that it is motion between matter and matter. So all movements must be referred to some definite systems of co-ordinate axes, change of axes introducing geometrical forces which account for the changes in the numerical magnitude of movements. But classical mechanics explained that these changes were influenced by certain forces of the field. Gravitational force, according to it, is quite real whereas the geometrical force, as illustrated by the idealised experiment of the rotating circular disc, is fictitious. Classical mechanics considers this distinction fundamental but the general theory of relativity asserts that it is impossible to distinguish between these two forces. It asserts that all axes of reference are equally valid. But the question arises, why should one explanation or postulate be considered more fundamental than the other? It is because of its simplicity—it is much simpler to refer all motions in a gravitational field to a particular set of co-ordinates. Not only that, it also enables us to look upon this particular framework and the special local properties of space as one and the same. So we conclude that it is the local properties of space and time that we take for the effect of the gravitational field or that the latter is due to the former, and going a little further we can say it is not matter that causes

the modifications of the characteristics of space and time but that matter itself is the result of this modification or that matter is the local curvature of the space-time continuum. Therefore the gravitational equations assume the form of structure laws in conformity with the physical laws of the field theory. With this new geometry the relativity theory explains better the outstanding discrepancy in the observed advance of the perihelion of Mercury and also the deviation or bending of the path of a ray of light by the sun's gravitational field. So the fundamental concepts of the 'straight line', the 'plane' etc., of Euclidean geometry lose their meaning. The new geometry or the physical geometry is not an independent self-contained science like Euclidean geometry. Space now is endowed with geometrical properties. The general theory of relativity is thus the logical culmination in the development of the field theory. Inertia, gravitation, physical behaviour of bodies and clocks are thus reduced to one field quality, the field itself depending upon the presence of the material bodies. "A purely physical Space might be regarded as in itself a property of Matter; but Matter is a creation of Energy in movement." ¹

Mass and energy, according to the relativity theory, are equivalent, that is, all that appears to our senses as visible tangible matter is nothing but a complex of energy. Greater concentration of energy or field precipitates matter. So nothing stands in the way of accepting field or energy as the one real entity or reality, but yet because of failure in formulating a pure field structure relativistic physics still assumes two entities—matter and field.

Relativity theory, according to popular belief, has banished the ether from science and has made everything in the world relative. This is not the fact. As relativity theory ascribes physical qualities to space, an ether in that sense exists. Though this ether has not revealed either its mechanical structure or absolute motion, yet it retains the property of transmitting electro-magnetic waves for which it was actually invented. The four-dimensional space is as absolute as Newton's space. In this continuum there is a measure where standard of reference and measurement is entirely independent of any reference systems. This is the foundation of the relativity theory and not the idea that space and time, so long considered absolute separately, have only relative meaning. Space, time and matter (or energy) were regarded as the three

1. The Life Divine, II, p. 100.

ultimate entities of physics. The special theory of relativity welded space and time into a single entity space-time, and the general theory of relativity, by connecting up the law of gravitation with the laws of motion, fused space-time and matter into one fundamental physical reality as absolute as anything can be.

Is Newton's mechanics then thrown completely overboard? No, but the philosophical background has radically changed. Newton's mechanics remains but only as a special case of the theory of relativity. Laws of the old mechanics are invalid when the velocity of moving particles approach that of light—the velocity of light, according to the theory of relativity, being the greatest or the uppermost limit. Again the old mechanics is invalid for regions where gravitational forces are strong. Relativity theory gives more accurate results in all such cases and the verdict of experiments has so far been in favour of it.

Should we take stock of things we have gained through the relativity theory or rather should we take stock of things that we have managed to lose, thus lessening our burden and anxiety that stock-taking always entails? We have been able to dispose of the assumptions of absolute time and inertial system; we have given up the mechanical conception of the ether; we make no distinction between mass and energy; we can regard gravitational and inertial mass as fully equivalent and finally the assumption of gravitational forces and their dependence on distance no longer worries us. The simplicity of the theory of relativity is very appealing—it is simple because of the fewer assumptions on which it stands, though the mathematical approach to the theory remains admittedly difficult. The drive of physics is towards the simplest theory with the fewest assumptions.

Next we come to the theory of quanta which is in fact of a more revolutionary character than even the relativity theory because it marks a complete break-away and departure from classical mechanics and it establishes physics on an entirely new foundation with fundamentally different principles. The wave theory of light gives a satisfactory explanation of the phenomena of interference and diffraction but it cannot explain such phenomena as photo-electric emission and scattering by free electrons. The latter

phenomena can only be explained by considering light as composed of small particles—packets of energy—called photons, just as real as electrons or any other particles. These photons have a definite amount of energy depending upon the frequency of light. So light is found to have two aspects, wave and particles. "We now ask: What is matter, what is an electron? Is it a particle or a wave? The electron behaves like a particle when moving in an external electric or magnetic field. It behaves like a wave when diffracted by a crystal."¹

So particles behave like waves and waves, like particles! Physicists are confronted with a new and very mysterious kind of difficulty. They are faced with two contradictory pictures of reality, separately neither picture can explain the phenomena of light or of matter but together they do. They cannot say whether the wave properties or the particle properties are the more fundamental. Equations of quantum mechanics satisfactorily represent the wave-particle effect. Photons and all other particles are considered to be controlled by waves in some mysterious way. The controlling influence of waves on particles, however, diminishes with the massiveness of particles. This influence is most noticeable and easily demonstrable in the case of photons, the lightest of all particles. According to wave mechanics the intensity of wave propagation controlling every independent particle, whether of matter or of radiation, represents the probability of the associated particles revealing itself at a certain point at a certain instant. There is therefore a fundamental limit to accuracy of knowledge that we can possibly attain about these wave groups that control the particle. Moreover, quantum mechanics enables us to find out how the particles will distribute themselves, but it cannot enlighten us on the point as to why they distribute themselves in that way. Laws of wave mechanics are of statistical character, that is, quantum physics formulates laws governing big aggregations and not their individual members. Waves and particles have proved very useful abstractions in experimental facts but wave mechanics does not assert that the reality is made up of both waves and particles together. Its laws govern a substratum, an unknown ground, and not the world of our mental picture in any direct way, that is, its equations must not be taken as a mathematical model of the atomic

1. The Evolution of Physics, p. 294.

structure, they are simply meant for the determination of the mathematical probabilities, of such structures. Therefore we must give up the idea of completely localising the particles in a theoretical model. What then is this substratum? How do we then picture it in our mind? That is exactly what we are forbidden to do—we are commanded not to probe the reality any deeper.

But the old bogeys, matter and field, still remain as disturbing factors as ever and the wave mechanics has not been able to get rid of them. Sri Aurobindo remarks, “Even if the dualistic appearance of Matter and Force be insisted on, it does not really stand in the way of this Monism. For it will be evident that essential Matter is a thing non-existent to the senses, and only, like the Pradhana of the Sankhyas, a conceptual form of substance; and in fact the point is increasingly reached where only an arbitrary distinction in thought divides form of substance from form of energy.”¹

So we find that the theories of relativity and quanta have brought a new conception of matter in physics. Today we no longer associate matter with an aggregation of hard particles but with mathematical formulae, with warps, woofs and kinks in the four-dimensional continuum. We may picture the external world in terms of concepts familiar to us such as waves, particles, curvature of space, remembering that the picture is a representation of the reality and not the reality itself. Physics of the nineteenth century deliberately attempted to identify the representation with reality whereas modern physics makes no such attempt, the question of such identification does not arise, because the physicist to-day knows that the mathematical formulae are only clues or abstract symbols used by the mind for knowledge. The authors observe, “Science did not succeed in carrying out the mechanical programme convincingly, and today no physicist believes in the possibility of its fulfilment”.² “The new quantum physics removes us still further from the old mechanical view, and a retreat to the former position seems, more than ever, unlikely.”³

After listening with rapt attention to the most fascinating story that modern physics has to tell, one interestedly asks, where is science actually drifting?

1. The Life Divine, I, p. 21.

2. The Evolution of Physics, p. 125.

3. Ibid p. 309.

The reality seems to recede further and further, the nearer the physicist approaches it. The firm bed-rock of matter, on which he put all his faith in building up a majestic edifice, has suddenly given way, he himself having stripped matter of all its tangibility, with the consequence that today he faces to his utter bewilderment the apparition of matter—the result of mysterious phenomena whose elusive activity is beyond his grasp and purview. Physics has dug very deep and reached an unknown substratum—the nature of which is so very different from that of the superstructure. In electric particles, wave groups and quanta of action, we reach ideas which are certainly not mechanical. Or probably one seriously reflects, do all these then, these electric particles, these photons, these waves go to form merely the clouds of dust that the physicist himself has whipped up from the unknown substratum by means of the powerful and ingeniously designed apparatus at his command, the reality remaining veiled by the fog thus created, beyond his observation—beyond his understanding? It is a great pity indeed that the authors, though quite awake to the philosophical implications of the theories of relativity and quanta, which together have given modern physics its characteristic form, have not developed the ideas involved in a separate section at the end which would have been a fitting epilogue to so admirable a book,—a book written with the sole object of depicting the part played by pure thoughts and ideas in the advancement of scientific knowledge: as the authors themselves observe, “It is our aim, in the following pages, to describe in broad outline that work of physicists which corresponds to the pure thinking of the investigator. We shall be chiefly concerned with the role of thoughts and ideas in the adventurous search for knowledge of the physical world.”¹ We collect and quote a few of the passages, strewn all over the body of the book, which will serve to give us a glimpse of the thoughts and ideas that work in the minds of the distinguished authors.

“Physical concepts are the free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world,”²

“The results of scientific research very often force a change in the philosophical view of problems which extend far beyond the restricted domain of science itself..... Once formed and widely accepted, however, they

1. The Evolution of Physics, p. 5.

2. ibid p. 93.

(philosophical generalisations) very often influence the further development of scientific thought by indicating one of the many possible lines of procedure." ¹

"During the second half of the nineteenth century new and revolutionary ideas were introduced into physics; they opened the way to a new philosophical view, differing from the mechanical one."²

"Fundamental ideas play the most essential role in forming a physical theory. Books on physics are full of complicated mathematical formulae. But thoughts and ideas, not formulae, are the beginning of every physical theory. They must later take the mathematical form of a quantitative theory, to make possible the comparison with experiment" ³

"Science is not just the collection of laws, a catalogue of unrelated facts. It is a creation of the human mind with its freely invented ideas and concepts."

We take the liberty of quoting a significant passage from another of Einstein's latest books that runs as follows: "Our experience hitherto justifies us in believing that nature is the realisation of the simplest conceivable mathematical ideas. I am convinced that we can discover by means of purely mathematical constructions the concept and the laws connecting them with each other, which furnish the key to the understanding of natural phenomena. But the creative principle resides in mathematics. In a certain sense, therefore, I hold it true that pure thought can grasp reality, as the ancients dreamed," ⁵

If mathematical laws are, as they surely are, the creation of the human mind, why does incontinent matter or material energy so scrupulously follow them? Why does the gross physical universe work on laws, principles, ideas and concepts so very alien to it? Why does this dumb inanimate matter reveal such perfect harmony and organisation as can only be based on the most intricate and abstruse mathematics that the human mind has so far been

1. The Evolution of Physics p. 55.

3. Ibid p. 291.

5. The World as I see it p. 136

2. Ibid p. 129.

4. Ibid p. 310.

able to develop? The ideal mathematical structure of the external world is yet escaping even the best mathematical minds! "This great mystery story is still unsolved. We cannot even be sure that it has a final solution¹." In one word, why does mind see its own reflection in matter? Is this agreement accidental or fundamental? In the course of this narrative we have found that identities, considered accidental by the old world scheme, are regarded by the new scheme as fundamental, giving new clues leading to a deeper and profounder understanding of nature. In the words of the authors, "A mystery story seems inferior if it explains strange events as accidents. It is certainly more satisfying to have this story follow a rational pattern".² Sri Aurobindo gives the answer in the following words, "On that hypothesis, there must be behind the action of the material Energy a secret involved Consciousness, cosmic, infinite, building up through the action of that frontal Energy its means of an evolutionary manifestation, a creation of itself in the boundless finite of the material universe..... It would then be perfectly intelligible why the inconscient does its works with a constant principle of mathematical architecture, of design, of effective arrangement of numbers, of adaptation of means to ends, of inexhaustible device and invention, one might almost say, a constant experimental skill and automatism of purpose."³

Physics does not sanction and may even vehemently protest against any such daring adventure into the speculative and metaphysical realm—a domain not its own. We quite understand the stand of the physicist because to him a belief in the existence of an independent physical world must be the necessary practical basis for his experimental work at the present stage; as Sri Aurobindo remarks, "The physical scientist probing into phenomena erects formulas and its processes; to his view mind may appear as a subjective result of Matter, and self and spirit as unreal; at any rate he has to act as if matter and energy alone existed and mind were only an observer of an independent physical reality which is unaffected by any mental processes or any presence or intervention of a cosmic Intelligence."⁴ However, "all insistence on the sole or the fundamental validity of the

1. The Evolution of Physics pp. 3, 4.

2. Ibid, p. 36.

3. The Life Divine Vol. II pp. 13, 14, 15.

4. Ibid p. 271.

THE NEW WORLD OF SCIENCE

objective real takes its stand on the sense of the basic reality of Matter. But it is now evident that Matter is by no means fundamentally real; it is a structure of Energy: it is becoming even a little doubtful whether the acts and creations of this Energy itself are explicable except as the motions of power of a secret Mind or Consciousness of which its processes and steps of structure are the formulas. It is therefore no longer possible to take Matter as the sole reality."¹ Why should modern science, which has on its forward march rejected and thrown off so many deep-rooted prejudices, shun conclusions that, though not immediately and directly connected with the present field of its enquiry and investigation; may be of utmost importance and help in the further healthy development of scientific thought and for a deeper and sounder foundation of the philosophical background of science? Max Planck, who needs no introduction, rightly observes, "For this reason a careful study of the views and ideas of our great philosophers might prove extremely valuable in this direction..... There have been times when science and philosophy were alien, if not actually antagonistic, to each other. These times have passed. Philosophers have realised that they have no right to dictate to scientists their aims and the methods for attaining them; and scientists have learned that the starting point of their investigations does not lie solely in the perception of the senses and that science cannot exist without some small portion of metaphysics. Modern physics impresses us particularly with the truth of the old doctrine which teaches that there are realities existing apart from our sense-perceptions, and that there are problems and conflicts where these realities are of greater value for us than the richest treasures of the world of experience."²

This is a typically characteristic statement representing the views of the majority of the eminent physicists of today and this change in the outlook distinctly shows how fundamental is the difference between the standpoint of modern physics and classical physics. By no means can modern science be stigmatised as a closed book—it has flung its iron gates wide open, extending far its own horizon, pointing even to other worlds beyond the horizon. It is of happy augury that after centuries of useless antagonism and rivalry we find ourselves today standing at the threshold of what may prove to be a

1. The Life Divine Vol. II, p. 547

2. Where is Science going?

common ground, paving the way for the final and lasting rapprochement between physics and philosophy, so very desirable for the integral approach to truth. That is why we, all the more, do not understand and appreciate the silence on the part of the authors on the philosophical problems that their own researches lead to. There is no reason for mutual competition and opposition between these two branches of knowledge as each has its own field of investigation, each can work freely and unhampered in its own sphere; in Sri Aurobindo's words, "Science and metaphysics (whether founded on pure intellectual speculation or, as in India, ultimately on a spiritual vision of things and spiritual experience) have each its own province and method of enquiry. Science cannot dictate its conclusions to metaphysics any more than metaphysics can impose its conclusions on Science."¹ Sympathetic exchange of ideas, thoughts or whatever they are culling, each in its own way, from reality will certainly be of immense help to their common endeavour to arrive at a complete knowledge of things. "Not only in the one final conception, but in the great line of its general results Knowledge, by whatever path it is followed, tends to become one."²

The authors state, "Without the belief that it is possible to grasp the reality with our theoretical constructions, without the belief in the inner harmony of our world, there could be no science. This belief is and always will remain the fundamental motive for all scientific creation. Throughout all our efforts, in every dramatic struggle between old and new views, we recognise the eternal longing for understanding, the ever-firm belief in the harmony of our world, continually strengthened by the increasing obstacles to comprehension."³ Mathematical architecture, however grandiose it may be, is after all an abstract shadow and cannot satisfy even the inquisitive mind for ever because it cannot say what things are in their essence, it only indicates how things behave, it cannot even tell why they behave that way. This intelligible mechanism is sure to fail one day and we would be left face to face with the utter mystery. Sri Aurobindo declares "The mystery of things is the true truth of things; the Intellectual presentation is only truth in representation, in abstract symbols, as if in a cubist art of thought-speech, in geometric

1. The Life Divine Vol. I p. 272.

2. Ibid Vol, I p. 20

3. The Evolution of Physics p. 312,13.

figure,"¹ The inner urge to know the why and what of things is much 'greater and stronger than the urge to know the how of things. So there is no limit to the possibilities of the scientific search after truth. As Sri Aurobindo so beautifully puts it, "But since its very soul is the search for knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier. We see already that advance in the obscure beginnings."²

The question whether causality, known also as determinism, the laws of which are the outcome of extreme generalisation suggested by the experience of the sequence of cause and effect, has been banished from the world of science naturally comes in at this stage and our survey will be incomplete if we leave it out on the ground that the matter is yet open to debate. According to classical physics events happened in space and time governed by strict determinism, that is, it described causal relationship of phenomena in terms of space and time, but according to the new physics of the quantum theory phenomena cannot be described in terms of space and time without bringing in an uncertainty element or, if its mathematical equations do express the causal relationship of phenomena, then the description of phenomena in terms of space and time becomes impossible. The electron is not represented by a corpuscle but by a wave-packet, so the knowledge of the exact position simultaneously with the exact velocity which is applicable to a particle does not apply to a wave-group. A lot of misunderstanding hangs round this uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics. The very name of it gives rise to unaccountable suspicion in the minds of the classical physicists as to whether free-will, volition and other human elements are being deliberately brought into the domain of physics, but the question is not that, the question is whether quantum physics does or does not assert the principle of determinism. Evidently it does not. This is not debatable—it is a scientific fact that quantum physics, is not based on the scheme of deterministic laws. The equations of wave-mechanics, based on the refinements of the new experimental technique, are solely concerned with pro-

1. The Life Divine, II, p. 96

2. The Life Divine Vol I p. 20.

babilities and averages. Causal laws arise out of statistical laws when the probability is so high as to be practically equivalent to certainty. So indeterminism is fundamental. Today the causal laws do not govern all the phenomena even of the physical world—not to mention those of the mental world. Einstein observes, "Causality is thus only conceivable as a Form of the theoretical system. Now modern physicists are mainly of the opinion that it is inadmissible to build up any sort of theory on what cannot, in principle, be tested."¹ "It is only in the quantum theory that Newton's differential method becomes inadequate and indeed strict causality fails us"². Max Planck also, so far as this point is concerned, agrees with Einstein when he says, "Thus from the outset we can be quite clear about one very important fact, namely, that the validity of the law of causation for the world of reality is a question that cannot be decided on grounds of abstract reasoning."³ So the principle of causality can remain as an invalid conception that is, only a theoretical conception incapable of experimental verification. Some physicists may entertain the hope of finding out in future a law which will reinstate causality with greater glory but physics cannot be founded on the expectation of anybody, however eminent he may be. The real answer to this all-important question may turn out to be not merely in the affirmative or in the negative, it may be touching deeper problems of reality and the answer consequently may be subtler, having great philosophical significance. Unfortunately, as the authors have not dealt with this point, we cannot go into more details. But this much can be said that the principle of indeterminacy removes many of the basic contradictions between problems of life and those of theoretical physics.

The authors have spared no pains in their effort to present, in the simplest language possible without at the same time sacrificing the rigour and precision demanded by science for its correct presentation, the successive stages of the evolution of the ideas of physics from the early concepts to the most recent theories of relativity and quanta and they have succeeded brilliantly in their attempt, specially when one considers how difficult and embarrassing a task it is to write on scientific matter without introducing experimental, mathematical and other technical details. There exists a widespread public curiosity to know the principal ideas and concepts of physics, particularly of the theories of relativity and quanta, and at the same time people are haunted

1. From a letter to Sir Herbert Samuel published in *Philosophy and the Ordinary Man.* p. 15.

2. *Nature*, 26 March 1927, p. 467.

3. *Where is Science going?* p. 113.

by a belief that science, in particular the theory of relativity, is beyond their reach, a belief which naturally defeats them before they have even begun or turned a page over; but though, as the authors warn us, this book will not read, to the disappointment of general expectation, like a novel or a fairy tale because of the inherent technical character of the subject that the authors have rightly not sacrificed as is generally done to popularise science, it will in our opinion prove to be the best guide to lead the reader with some genuine interest through the maze of the complicated scientific facts to an understanding of the fundamental thoughts and principles that underlie the mathematical superstructure and, also, it will, in the words of the authors, "give some idea of the eternal struggle of the inventive human mind for a fuller understanding of the laws governing physical phenomena."

JATINDRA NATH BALL

The Changed Scientific Outlook

(A LETTER)



There is, of course, more than one line of scientific outlook at the present day. It is well-known that continental scientists generally and Marxist scientists in particular belong to a different category from Jeans and Eddington. But the important point is this : a considerable body of scientists frankly hold the " idealist " view, and these come from the very front rank *qua* scientists. Discussion arises when it is seriously put forward that Eddington and Jeans are not authorities in science equalling any other great names ; as if it is contended that because a scientist holds the idealist view, ergo he is a pseudo-scientist, a third degree luminary, a back-bencher, a medievalist. The Marxists also declare, we may recall in this connection, that the bourgeois cannot be a true poet, in order to be a poet one must be a proletarian.

There is a scientific obscurantism, which is not less obscure because it is scientific, and one must guard against it with double care and watchfulness. It is the mentality of the no-changer whose motto seems to be : " Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même ". Let me explain. The scientist who prefers still to be called a materialist must remember that the (material) ground under his feet has shifted considerably since the time he first propounded his materialistic position : he does not stand in the same place (or plane ?) as he did even twenty years ago. The change has been basic and fundamental — fundamental, because the very definitions and postulates with which we once started have been called in question, thrown over-board or into the melting pot.

Shall we elucidate a little ? We were once upon a time materialists, that is to say, we had very definite and fixed notions about Matter : to Matter we gave certain invariable characteristics, inalienable properties. How many of them stand to-day unscathed on their legs ? Take the very first, the crucial

THE CHANGED SCIENTIFIC OUTLOOK

property ascribed to Matter : "Matter is that which has extension". Well, an electric charge, a unit energy of it, the ultimate constituent of Matter, as discovered by Science today, can it be said to occupy space ? In the early days of Science one Boscovich advanced a theory according to which the ultimate material particle (a molecule, in his time) does not occupy space, it is a mere mathematical 'point toward or from which certain forces act. The theory, naturally, was laughed out of consideration ; but today we have come perilously near it. Again, another postulate describing Matter's dharma was : "two material particles cannot occupy the same place at the same time". Now what do you say of the neutron and proton that coalesce and form the unit of a modern atomic nucleus ? Once more, the notion of the indestructibility of matter has been considerably modified in view of the phenomenon of an electric particle (electron) being wholly transmuted ("dematerialised" as the scientists themselves say) into a light particle (photon). Lastly, the idea of the constancy of *mass*—a bedrock of old-world physics—is considered today to be a superstition, an illusion. If after all these changes in the idea of Matter, a man still maintains that he is a materialist, as of old, well, I can only exclaim in the Shakespearean phrase : "Bottom, thou art translated" ! What I want to say is that the changes that modern physics proposes to execute in its body are not mere amendments and emendations, but they mean a radical transfiguration, a subversion and a mutation. And more than the actual changes effected, the possibilities, the tendencies that have opened out, the lines along which further developments are proceeding do point not merely to a reformation, but a revolution.

Does this mean that Science after all is veering to the Idealist position ? Because we have modified the meaning and connotation of Matter does it follow that we have perforce arrived at spirituality ? Not quite so. As Jeans says, the correct scientific position would be to withhold one's judgement about the ultimate nature of matter, whether it is material or mental (spiritual, we would prefer to say) : it is an attitude of *non possumus*. But such neutrality, is it truly possible and is it so very correct ? We do see scientists lean on one side or the other, according to the vision or predisposition that one carries. •

From our standpoint, as we view the modern scientific developments, what we see is not that Matter has been spiritualised, but that it has been con-

siderably dematerialised, even immaterialised, that it is in the process of further dematerialisation or immaterialisation. That opens a long and large vista. We say Science by itself cannot arrive at the spiritual, for there is a frontier bar which has to be overleaped, negotiated by something like a somersault. For the scientific view is after all limited by one scope and range of the physical eye. Still, this eye has begun to see things and in a manner to which it was not normally accustomed; it has been trained and educated, made keen and supple so that it seems to be getting more and more attuned even to other vibrations of light beyond and outside the normal sevenfold spectrum.

Science has not spiritualised (or idealised or mentalised) the world; it has not spiritualised itself. Agreed. But what it has done is remarkable. First, with its new outlook it has cut away the ground from where it was wont to give battle to religion and spirituality, it has abjured its cast-iron strait-jacket mentality which considered that senses and syllogism encompass all knowledge and objects of knowledge. It has learnt humility and admits of the possibility of more things there being in heaven and earth which are not amenable to its fixed co-ordinates. Secondly, it has gone at times even beyond this attitude of benevolent neutrality. For certain of its conclusions, certain ways of formulation seem to echo other truths, other manners. That is to say, if Science by itself is unable to reach or envisage the spiritual outlook, yet the position it has reached, the vistas it envisages seem to be not perhaps exactly one with, but in line with what our vision (of the scientific world) would be like if once we possess the spiritual eye. Matter, Science says today, is energy and forms of matter, objects, are various vibrations of this one energy. What is this energy? According to science, it is electrical, radiant, etherial (Einstein replaces "ether" by "field") — biological science would venture to call it life energy. You have only to move one step farther and arrive at the greater and deeper generalisation — Matter is a mode of the energy of consciousness, all forms of Matter are vibrations of consciousness.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

War and After-War

Like all human affairs war today shows, in efficiency and organisation marked improvement on its past varieties. In the first world war we saw the tanks and planes appearing in its last stages after a long indecisive period of trench-technique whereas in the present they rattled and roared from the first day the hostilities were declared and made some of the "Lines", built after spending years of toil and streams of gold, useless monuments of folly. In other details too, human ingenuity is proved to be definitely on the road to progress though human goodness is lagging too much behind. Naturally the result has been spectacular. In one year battles that completely dwarfed Napoleonic campaigns were staged, fought and won in the time-old cockpit of Europe and Russia. City after city in England, Europe and European Russia burned to depict human vandalism and barbarism in a fitting dark red colour. The agonies of the people of those countries, especially the evacuees of the bombed and razed cities, bore no comparison to past human history. The unique fact that the civil population suffered equally with the men in arms, made the face of the "total war" quite clear. Here was a conflagration which knew no favours, partialities or distinctions. It spread from the front to the home, and established secret centres of sinister force in even non-belligerent countries. It did not leave any portion of humanity without its impact and, therefore, its consequences assumed paramount interest for the world as a whole.

We are prone to see the war in terms of prepared, perfected and organised armaments. We often overlook the psychological tempo that had to be created, developed and taken to its frenziest height. For, machines cannot be set to work without minds. A German tank will stand before a British, American or Russian tank as indifferently as two statues, cold and utterly passive. It is men who ply them and make them carry out their nefarious work. Even the robot planes or tanks work only when they are set according to plan and calculation. The human hand behind this horrid holocaust is the real

culprit. And it is the hand of a consciousness caged in the limitations of a separatist mind and grown perverse, losing its true light and insight and, therefore, sowing this unprecedented whirlwind to reap very nearly the destruction of itself and its civilization.

When the last war ended, many gave a sigh of relief, thinking that wars would be no more and ever-lasting peace would be ushered in. For, the men at the helm had raised the slogan of "war to end war". But unfortunately the course of world events does not move with the consent of the self-styled wise men or according to the wishful thinking of the man-in-the street. The movement of the world has its basis in the working of Prakriti or Nature with an ultimate sanction of the Divine. The workings of Prakriti are elusive and the human intellect that tries to gauge them by means of its scanty powers falls too short and hence methods of practical observation and experiment in the realm of outward phenomena without reaching their inner core of the divine consciousness fail to impart cent-percent true knowledge or anticipation of the future. However, a pragmatic analysis is frequently helpful and an anticipation based on such analysis proves sometimes correct. That is why certain economists and politicians could correctly forecast the events that followed the last war.

At the close of that great tragedy the world saw for the first time, though temporarily, the realisation of its ideal in a solid and concrete form "begotten at Paris with the blessings of premiers and presidents, the constitution of an international society, supported by the armed force of great nations and empires and therefore sure to be practicable" (*War and Self-Determination* by Sri Aurobindo). It was fondly hoped that the League of Nations would make 'war, militarism, oppression, exploitation an ugly dream of the past, induce Capital and Labour, lion and lamb, to lie down side by side in peace and not, as a wicked Bolshevism proposes, one well digested inside the other, and in fact bring about, before long, sooner it is hoped rather than later, the grand fraternity of mankind". (Ibid).

But the League failed dismally within a short time because "the circumstances of its inception were adverse and except by a tremendous effort of self-conquest in the minds of the rulers and statesmen of the victorious nations, a self-conquest rendered a thousand times more diffi-

cult by the stupendous magnitude and the intoxicating completeness of their victory, any at all complete result and auspicious new beginning could not be hoped for". (*Ibid*). This fate was prophesied by Sri Aurobindo for the League at the very outset when he wrote that "an effective League of Nations must draw into itself all the existing nations of mankind; for any considerable omission or exclusion will bring in almost inevitably an element of future danger, if possible disagreements and collisions, perhaps of a rival grouping with jealousies which must lead to another and more colossal catastrophe" (*Ibid*). And we all know well how the expected has happened with all the force that human ingenuity could muster.

Nevertheless, human history is a history of the realization of an ideal. The process may appear at some stage retarded, half-done or even abruptly given up. But a minute understanding will show that there is a definite process at work and it is not without a definite ideal or goal to be achieved.

This fact has been admitted even by modern sociologists. Even the dialectical materialists who will always swear by blind, heartless Matter do admit an ideal set forth by a struggling humanity growing, according to them, in the channels of political economy. The only difference in their reading of the situation is that whereas the idealists would posit an uncompromising eternal goal to be reached by not only humanity but by the whole material evolution, the dialectical materialists would present us with a temporary, human ideal towards which, they would say, the struggling mass of human beings is going. Apart from this difference there is general agreement among modern thinkers that human society is on the path of evolution, that is to say, something is being evolved out of the present through a process which all admit not to be a bloodless, painless one.

Long before, Sri Aurobindo had told us that at present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny. The present war when it broke in 1939 made this fact abundantly clear. The world was, as it were, given a definite choice whether it would like to tread the path of human evolution or turn about in mad frenzy destroying all the good that had been accumulated by humanity through countless years. It became clear even to spiritual seekers that they could hardly remain indifferent

with impunity. We had ample evidence in history to show that conquerors had done enormous harm to civilization, but civilization itself was never brought into question. The very fundamentals or values of civilization were never so far doubted. The individual autocrats, princes or feudal chiefs went beyond bounds in particular spheres but there was never an attempt to destroy the cultural values of the human mind, the values that were established after a long period of arduous struggle through dark ages. A grand philosophy of ruthlessness, a minute science of its application to all without exception was created by the Nazis and the Fascists, and arms, deadly weapons, were forged and employed to establish it all over the world. Fortunately the attempt did not succeed; for humanity at large chose to tread the old path of gradual evolution of mankind even at the cost of rivers of blood.

Of course, by a mere choice of the right path humanity may not succeed completely. If we do not know the real nature of the present calamity nor try to root out the cause of it for ever, there is every chance that again after some time the evil may erupt with greater and more vicious force. Nor should we leave the path of progress in the middle and allow the forces of reaction to grow in concealment, only to show themselves at an opportune time. It is essential that our aim should be to work not only incessantly but in entirety or rather integrally. Sri Aurobindo has said that the present human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. Externally also, human life finds itself today in a structure of unmanageable hugeness and complexity all around. The old simplicity of life and its surroundings is no more to be seen. Day by day the remotest and most isolated portions of human habitation are being drawn into the vortex of the complicated and gigantic life of the modern age. The whole machinery, social, administrative, economic and cultural has become too complex and the disparity is felt more when we compare the mental capacity of the present man with the demands made by such complex organisation. Not only that, but when the ego and the appetite of man remain on a lower level, as observed, to-day, the danger is increased because there is every likelihood that he may utilise all the hugeness and intricacy of the present society and government to crush out the last bit of spiritual instinct remaining in him. A destructive attempt was made on an unprecedented scale in the war that has just terminated in Europe.

In Asia the dark forces have not yet lost every hope of establishing their philosophy on earth. A little while ago there was a chance of winning both in Europe and in Asia in their struggle to pervert everything that is valuable in human life, a struggle into which they plunged because they were not endowed with a seeing mind or an intuitive soul of knowledge that would make the basic fullness of the present life a condition for the growth of something that exceeded it.

The individual aggressiveness of man, if it is not checked or rooted out, may usher in collective aggressiveness or an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. In addition, the powers of the human brain as evidenced in the recent scientific development strengthen the movement of aggression. Science has put many instruments of the universal Force into the hands of man who is not worthy of them because of his mal-development or insufficient development. One cannot expect such a half-developed creature to utilize scientific power for a good cause; on the contrary, there is every reason to believe that he would do the opposite.

Thus, if we view evolution on the basis of ego and segmentation we will have "a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at their disposal, in the belief that this is the way out to something ideal" (*The Life Divine*). If we examine the nature of all the present "isms" the point will be at once clear to us. The human evolution, even its material counterpart, is tending towards increased universality. Take for instance the method of capitalist production as compared with the feudal; but the danger is exactly there. If there is a leap on the basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening into the universal would only create a universalised confusion and discord and an inevitable armageddon like world war II.

The socialists maintain that the human consciousness would elevate itself when it finds itself in elevating environments, for according to them it is

the environments that create the suitable consciousness. They further maintain that because production is becoming socialised it is but natural that distribution must also become socialised and therefore the necessity of socialism is already involved in the socialised production. It is the capitalist ownership of the means of production that comes in the way and therefore it must be done away with. The main fault in this theory is that it seeks to resolve the problem from the basis of mind and its needs. But the mind by its very nature is separatist in outlook and cannot overcome this limitation by gaining a supremacy over its environments. The more it is fed by the conquests of nature, the more will its needs and desires grow, and thus the vicious circle may never end. The socialists hope to transform the separatist mind into a universalised mind; that is to say, change its quality altogether or in other words elevate it into what spiritual philosophy calls the Higher Mind.

Of course, the establishment of the Higher Mind and even the Supermind which is the highest divine dynamis is going to be a fact in future but it cannot happen through changes in the environments alone. It can happen through an effort, sincere and faithful, of the consciousness itself. It is the consciousness that requires a transformation all round and integral. Spirituality shows a way towards such a transformation and therefore is more valuable for realizing the ideal of true happiness.

The socialists intend also to remove the inequalities brought about by human beings in their relation with one another. They do not claim to abolish the natural inequalities which are beyond their power. This itself is a proof of the inadequacy of their methods. For when primary human wants are satisfied and production is distributed equally with grievance to none, the human mind, if left to itself, will still fret against natural inequalities—cultural or intellectual, physical or biological, geological or meteorological. The struggle of the mind which has been educated so long to remain attached to its inclinations, desires and vital appetites and to see that they are satisfied, is bound to see a “class-war” still raging, with the only difference that the old classes will have given place to new. Even on the statement of the dialectical materialists this is so because the contradictions are never abolished for good. They are only synthesised in a new category which gives a new contradiction, continuing thus the eternal dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis again

and again. Thus neither the dialectical materialists nor the socialists promise that humanity can ever attain a stage where mind will find its complete realisation and fulfilment. A mind which is a product of its environments can never attain its full size inasmuch as it can never get beyond its creator Matter, the opposite of Mind.

If this theoretic refutation of the socialist theory does not suffice, let us study the present economic history of the world. If there is ripeness in the being to create a socialist mind there should not be any difficulty in establishing the socialist society. Perhaps the socialists may argue that the majority of human beings have no capacity to realize it; they have to be made conscious of their existence and relation in society. Even then one does find that intellectuals side with the forces that are working not only against civilization but against their own ultimate interests. People fighting for Nazism or Fascism are the very people whose interests ultimately lie on the opposite side and there is a class of people who stand to lose all ultimately if Fascism or Nazism is destroyed and still they are fighting on the side of progress and culture. This shows that it is not the political or economic interests that alone determine the trend of man's actions or movements. It is rather the quality of his consciousness that is the real guiding, though hidden, factor. Of course, the material sheath over this consciousness swerves him often from his path. But, that is bound to be so in the case of people who live on lower planes of consciousness where the physical or vital predominates over the mental, and where the higher mental is scarcely on the scene.

To arrive at a correct estimate, one should say that socialism is only a half-truth. For, after all, it is "a rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and the materialistic human being and his life, a search for the perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man". And in spite of the truth supporting these ideas, this is not, according to Sri Aurobindo, sufficient to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself. Rather, if it is to live, it must evolve beyond anything that it at present is. Even now in the present war one of the parties is aiming at a reversal of human values while the other is striving for the discovery of new values and a new and better foundation of human society. Both are goaded to act by the life-instinct in the race and in the average man. For the present we may leave

those who are trying to reverse all human values out of our consideration. But as for those who desire to found a new and better society with "four freedoms", even their effort "has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so arrive at a life of identity for the Community in place of a life of difference". In order to realise these ends some of their promoters may adopt or advocate forcible means. Not only that but for the successful materialisation of these ideas or slogans all other thoughts will have to be excluded and the mind of the individual suppressed. This would be nothing but a mechanised ordering of the elements of life, a mechanised unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of the man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. According to Sri Aurobindo, "the communal ego is idealised as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error." (*The Life Divine*). What is required is not the suppression of the ego but its transformation into a higher category, rather its divinisation. Moreover, there is danger in forming a collective ego out of individual egos if the collective ego is maintained in an obscure form; "for collective ego is not the soul or self of the community, it is a life-force that rises from the sub-conscious and if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful and dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and the bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her" (Ibid)

Nor is any other solution desirable which attempts to repose on materialistic reason and a unified organisation of the economic life of the race achieved with forceful repression. "But through the growth of consciousness the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness: for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unplastic and unprogressive". And hence we cannot successfully remove the disorders due to the growth of the individual mind and life by the suppression of the individual. The true cure, according to Sri Aurobindo, is only "by his progres-

tion, to His greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected" (*The Life Divine*).

It is, therefore, the transformation of human consciousness into higher and higher categories and ultimately into the Divine, that is the proper solution for all the crises that visit humanity treading the path of evolution. The whole life and work of Sri Aurobindo is dedicated to this end, to show the part by which a society of supramentalised or gnostic beings can be established on this earth with nothing of the physical, vital or mental suppressed but everything divinised to form a beautiful flawless harmony.

VASANTA K. DONDE

ERRATA

POEMS

Page	Title of the Poem	Line					
3	'Prelude'	7	Delete	-	after	questful	
5	'The Divine Love'	4	Read	this	for	the	
5	Do.	12	..	Light	..	light	
5	Do.	12	..	Love	..	love	
5	'The Flower of light'	10	..	through	..	with	
6	'New Country'	7	..	false	..	fales	
8	'Hymn to Grace'	22	..	inconscience	..	inconsience	
15	'The Sleeping Lion'	4	..	upgazing	..	uppazing	
15	Do.	10	..	plumbless	..	plumbjess	
16	'Descent'	19	..	universe	..	Universe	
21	'An Echo'	1	..	Thy	..	thy	
22	'Sri Aurobindo'	10	..	Light	..	light	
23	Do.	24	..	Seer	..	seer	
23	Do.	24	..	sources	..	Sources	
24	Do.	34	..	Thy	..	thy	
	'Mansion of Love'	14	..	Bliss	..	bliss	

Page	Line	Read	For
31	4	beginning	begining
32	4, 6, 9,	intuition	intution
33	18	will	wiil
34	6	life	lifc
			matter
			Sir
		is It yet	is yet
45	20	Sri	Sir
46	24	encountered	encounteed
46	32	than man	than as man
48	13	Neanderthal	Neanderttal
49	25	Sri	Sir
50	6	Supermind	supermind
50	15	Sri	Sir
51	29	Truth-Power of the Supreme	truth-power of the supreme
51	32	Truth-Power or Real-Idea	truth-power or the Real Idea
52	33	Truth-Will of the Spirit	truth-will of the Spirit
54	7	conscious-	co-operation
55	3	Sri	Sir

Page	Line	Read	For
54	17	Truth-Power	truth-power
55	4	about last thirty years	about thirty years
55	15	even the writing of works of no less importance than <i>The Life Divine</i>	even the writing of <i>The Life Divine</i>
55	29	established	established
55	32	Sri Aurobindo	Sri Aurobindo's
59	5	Nietzsche	Neitzsche
59	6	conception	conceptton
59	9	Nietzsche	Nietzsche
59	12	existence	existenc
59	32	of	oi
60	16	the	the
61	32	progress	progress
69	2	through out	throught
82	17	vowel	vowl
84	3, 4	translation	trans-tion
85	27	classicism	clasicism
88	19	this	thir
89	16	otiose-re-labelling	otiose-labelling
91	4	metres	meters
92	17	a dactyl	adactyl
93	16	possibilities	possibilitics
93	26	masterpiece	masterpiece
109	25	rests	restes
113	18	architecture	architecture
114	4	musician	misician
114	11	truth	rruth
114	12	presentation	presntation
114	13	self-contradiction	self-contadiction
114	27	reminds	reminads
115	4	beautiful	beaufiful
117	3	iridescent	iridescent
123	13	hasten	hasan
125	1	perplexities	perplexitins
127	16	Pondicherry	pnndicherry
134	18	democracy	demoracy
143	1	ultimate	ultimatc
144	1	be	by
144	1	by	be
148	5	accidental	acidental
148	10	satisfying	satisfying
153	4	expectation	expectation
160	10	establish	estabbish

